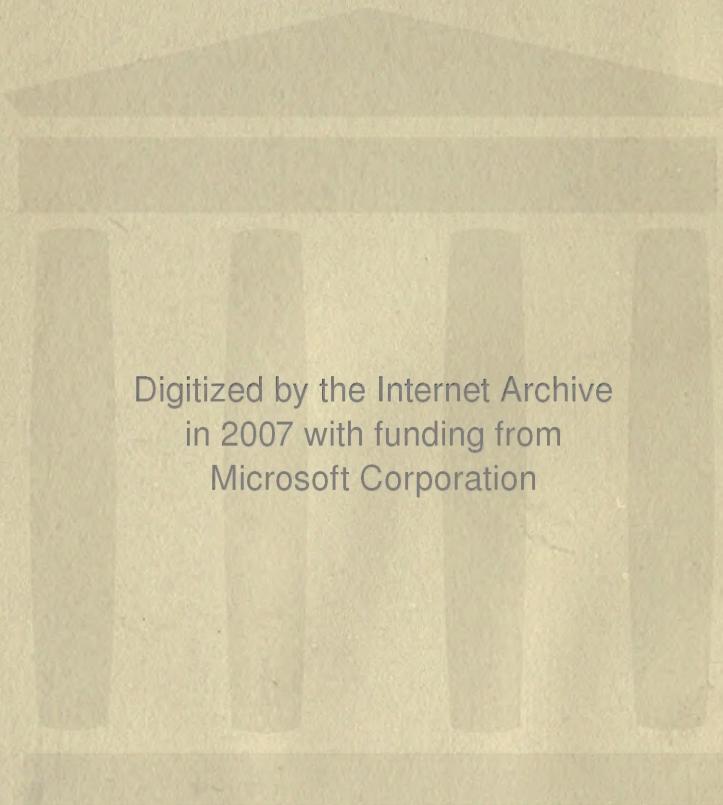




~~Start m
F.I.S.T 21800
D.J.~~



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

The Ormonde Arms

A long search for the original English edition of "John Decastro" led to the discovery of a copy adorned with the crest here reproduced. It is the coat of arms of the great Anglo-Irish family of Butler, Earls of Ormonde, who achieved ducal dignity under Charles I., were attainted of treason under George I., and were restored to their Irish dignities in 1791. Walter, 18th Earl of Ormonde, as the head of the family when "Decastro" was published, was the probable owner of the copy from which this new edition is printed. There is nothing to forbid the assumption that he was "the Earl of" to whom the book is dedicated.

Ormonde.

אנו רשותם ורשותם



Ormonde.

22
M4277h

THE HISTORY OF
Mr. John Decastro
AND HIS BROTHER BAT
COMMONLY CALLED OLD CRAB

THE MERRY MATTER WRITTEN BY
JOHN MATHERS
THE GRAVE BY A SOLID
GENTLEMAN



69 302
15 503

IN TWO VOLUMES

Volume One

THE IRWIN PRESS
FRICK BUILDING, PITTSBURG, PA.
MDCCCCII

COPYRIGHT, 1902, BY
JAMES T. TYNDALL

Registered at Stationers' Hall, London, England
(*Printed in the United States of America*)

INTRODUCTION TO THE ORMONDE EDITION

THIS new edition of an English masterpiece calls for some introductory words of comment and explanation.

The "History of Mr. John Decastro" is one of the most remarkable books in our language. It is remarkable, first, as the finest specimen of Rabelaisian humor ever produced in a country that has given birth to many imitators of the Gargantuan Frenchman. Secondly, its career has been as remarkable as are its contents.

Issued in London in 1815, its title page read as does the title page of the present edition, save for the imprint, which ran: "London: Printed for T. Egerton, Whitehall, 1815." An American edition speedily followed in Boston. Neither in England nor in America does it appear that the book attracted any considerable attention on its first appearance. The *Edinburgh Review*, in its quarterly number for June, 1815, mentioned it, by title only, as among the novels of the preceding quarter. But the *Edinburgh* did not condescend to notice it.

The *Quarterly Review* passes it by altogether. Only in the *New Monthly Magazine* (April, 1815), among all contemporary periodicals, have I been able to find a

Introduction

notice, a very brief notice, under the general head of "New Publications in February and March." Though brief, the notice is distinctly complimentary. "In point of humor," says the *New Monthly*, "the book stands without a parallel in our day, and we doubt very much whether Fielding or Smollett could, with any chance of success, dispute the palm with the author of 'The History of Mr. John Decastro.'"

This is the sole exception, then. For the rest, the critics neglected the book. The public did not clamor for copies. Nor did any one seek to penetrate the mystery of its authorship.

To that mystery the title-page furnishes no clue. "John Mathers," who is credited with a share in the work, is merely the name of one of the characters in the novel—"more familiarly known as Old Comical." How he comes to figure on the title-page, as well as in the story, is nowhere explained. We guess, of course, that it is a humorous freak on the part of the real author to hide behind the dual masks of "Old Comical" and "the Solid Gentleman," and, by the alternate use of each, to gain a more poignant interest and a more vivid verisimilitude. The trick undoubtedly adds to the quaintness of a very quaint book.

Two score years passed away. The book, it would seem, had sunk into oblivion. Yet its memory was kept alive in an esoteric fashion by here and there a true believer. Among these believers, I am quite confident, was William Makepeace Thackeray. The reasons for

Introduction

this confidence I shall give anon. Among them, also, I am equally confident, was Edward Bruce Hamley, not yet forgotten as the author of "Lady Lee's Widowhood." The reasons for the latter confidence I shall give right here and now.

In January, 1857, all true believers were rejoiced by the appearance of an article in *Blackwood's Magazine* entitled "John Decastro, a Quaint Réchauffé." It was a notable bit of literary criticism. Likewise it was full of wit and humor, of light-hearted buoyancy, of infectious enthusiasm. All these qualities of style suggested, or rather insisted, that the critic could be none other than the brilliant young author who had just captured the reading public with his "Lady Lee's Widowhood." This novel, it may be remembered, first appeared as a serial in *Blackwood's Magazine*.

At all events, and by whomsoever written, the article fulfilled its expressed aim "to prevent the memory of the Decastros from perishing utterly from the face of the earth." It did more than this. It brought together the scattered ashes of the Decastro cult and fanned them into a flame that has burned steadily to the present day. The old editions of the book have been eagerly in demand ever since; though the supply has been utterly inadequate to meet the demand.

And every now and then some self-fancied Columbus of criticism has re-discovered the book and rushed into print with an enthusiastic laudation of his find.

But no Columbus has yet discovered the author's

Introduction

name. Repeated appeals by baffled investigators to that champion of the literary questioner, the London *Notes and Queries*, have failed to elicit any clue. With one exception the bibliographies and the dictionaries of anonymous and pseudonymous literature are silent as to book and author alike. That exception is Cushing's "Anonyms," which names the book and boldly credits it to George Colman the Younger (1762-1836). As Mr. Cushing gives no authority for his ascription we may consider it a mere guess.

Is it a good guess? Not very. It has, indeed, a certain external plausibility. The younger Colman is known in our day as the author of "Broad Grins," a collection of humorous ballads, and of two comedies—"The Heir-at-Law" and "The Poor Gentleman"—which are still found to possess a considerable vitality and have sustained the test of revival before a modern audience. They are indifferent comedies, but excellent farces—full of broad fun, pungently seasoned with equivoque and verbal pleasantry, portraying character and picturing life in much the same coarse colors that the artist of a circus caravan might employ. In these purely mirth-provoking qualities they are akin to "John Decastro." But the author of the latter seems to me to have a wider humanity, a more kindly tolerance, a finer insight—a greater genius, in short. He caricatures, but he hints the truth behind the caricature.

His women, for example, are drawn with a free hand and a thick brush, yet their subtler selves, full of win-

Introduction

some and baffling self-contradictions, are reproduced with a good deal of tact and skill.

In short, the *Blackwood* critic is right when he describes the characters in John Decastro as “grotesque, yet clear and individual, and conveying a vivid idea of reality through a wildly and wilfully exaggerated medium.” Now, this idea of reality is absent from Colman’s exaggerations.

The same critic describes the humor of the book as racy, genial, and Rabelaisian. “Rabelaisian” indeed, is the term that springs naturally to mind. The humor of “John Decastro” is distinguished by a Rabelaisian exuberance of life and overflow of animal spirits. But it is marred likewise by some of the Rabelaisian freedom of speech. So much is acknowledged by our critic. “The author,” he says, “has some other peculiarities in common with Rabelais besides his humor; and the fastidious, not to say squeamish taste of our times rejects all pleasantry in which there is any tincture of impropriety. He was, we doubt not, some bold, unconventional spirit, careless of forms, impatient of restraint—a plain blunt man, who spoke right on—indifferent as to whose corns he trod on; and, therefore, though the morality of the book is perfectly unimpeachable, yet we doubt not the breadth of the humor has caused it to be utterly ignored by the ‘damned disinheriting countenance’ of modern decorum.”

There is something in this. Yet, after all, modern decorum has not disinherited Washington Irving’s

Introduction

“Knickerbocker,” which was published only a few years earlier, and which, with less verbal indecorum, has certainly a great deal more of indecorous suggestion. Nor has it disinherited Smollett, who is much coarser, Fielding, who is more plain spoken, or Sterne, who exhibits, what “John Mathers” never does, a prurient sympathy with vice. Indeed, vice and crime alike excite the robust, you might even say the uproarious, denunciation of John Mathers. The majority of his characters, and those the most lovingly lingered over, are singularly wholesome types. His heroines, without exception, are virtuous. There are villains, who provide pitfalls for the feet of the virtuous and a background of adventure for what would otherwise be a mere collection of comic scenes, but their deeds are not gloated over, and the villains themselves are made to suffer agonies of remorse such as villains of real life never suffer, or they are overtaken by Nemesis with a certainty that the Nemesis of real life never exhibits.

Our unknown author, then, derives his manner from Rabelais. His mannerisms show distinct traces of Sterne. He has the whimsicalities and eccentricities of Yorick. But he is no slavish imitator. In colloquial ease and a certain candor of self-mockery he anticipates Thackeray. Indeed, the anticipation is so evident that, as already intimated, I have come to the conclusion that Michael Angelo Titmarsh had read and admired John Mathers.

Let us dwell a little longer upon this likeness to

Introduction

Thackeray. Doubtless 'tis due, in a measure, to the fact that Thackeray was a careful student of the elder masters (somewhat obsolete among his own contemporaries) under whose influence the author of "John Decastro" must have been born and bred. "John Mathers" imbibed Fielding and Sterne through his pores, as Thackeray did through his brains. Fielding and Sterne constituted the atmosphere of the former's world, as of the latter's library. But, moreover, there was a natural tendency in both to look upon the world and upon art from the standpoint elected also by Fielding and Sterne, the standpoint of a "most humorous melancholy," which loves art but recognizes its inadequacy (humanly speaking) to paint the world, loves the world but recognizes its inability to reach the ideals of art, and effects a compromise in mockery that includes not only the world and art but the self of the spectator.

To some of us this attitude is very satisfying; to others it is entirely abhorrent. Dickens and Howells, for example, protest against it. Says Dickens: "I thought that he (Thackeray) too much feigned a want of earnestness, and that he made a pretence of under-rating his art, which was not good for the art that he held in trust." Now see how closely Howells echoes Dickens: "He (Thackeray again) put on a fine literary air of being above his business; he talked of fiction as fable-land, when he ought to have known it and proclaimed it the very home of truth, where alone we can see men through all their disguises; he formed the

Introduction

vicious habit of spoiling the illusion, or clouding the clear air of his art by the intrusion of his own personality." I trust that in their respective degrees I can appreciate both Dickens and Howells. But, speaking for myself, I prefer the writers who do not take themselves or their "art" too seriously, and whose sense of humor does not stop at their creations, but includes also the creative Ego.

In that Bedlam of self-contradictory follies which is known as modern criticism two well-known phrases stand out clear and shining in their sanity. The first is Matthew Arnold's description of literature as "a criticism of life." This suggests, but only suggests, the inference that the value of the criticism is bounded by the limits of the critic's intelligence. Therefore I prefer my second quotation, which expressly states what the other only suggests:

"Literature," says Zola, "is life seen through a temperament."

There you are exactly. A work of art may cheer, may stimulate, may amuse, may elevate, may instruct. It may present pictures of mortal men and mutable manners, which will be immortally and immutably true. But its severely scientific value lies in the fact that it interprets a temperament, that it reveals a personality.

Back of every important personality is a vast constituency of less important personalities which it sums up, interprets, and reveals. But no man's personality,

Introduction

not Balzac's nor Goethe's—nay, nor Shakespeare's himself, has been large enough to sum up, interpret, and reveal the aggregate personality of the race.

A work of art is a human document. True enough. But in order to appraise aright its humanitarian message you must first read aright the documentary evidence it presents concerning the artist.

All which merely means that art, except in its intentions, deserves none of the fine epithets which Mr. Howells expends upon it, but is (in his own phrase) a "fable-land" wherein the artist records his own more or less truthful imaginations concerning his fellow beings, and in so doing reveals himself and the greater or lesser constituency that lie back of himself.

But to get back to "Mr. John Decastro."

It is this whimsical sort of self-mockery which doubtless was responsible for our author's alternate use of his serious and comic masks. The Solid Gentleman is continually interfering to check the extravagances of Old Comical, and this very interference is additionally provocative to laughter. Without any machinery of this sort, Thackeray's dual nature was also continually protesting, each side against the other, and with a like effect of whimsical humor. Sometimes the fun is at the expense of the thought, sometimes at the form into which it is put.

I think I have been lucky enough to lay my finger upon two instances, one from each of these authors,

Introduction

which are so far alike in substance and method that they will illustrate my meaning better than any further beating about the bush of phrase.

In the seventeenth chapter of the second volume of the present work may be found (p. 360) a riotously humorous attack upon the squeamishness of the age, followed by these sentences: “Acerbus soon followed Genevieve to her room—(*N.B. The Solid Gentleman laid violent hands on the pen at this time, or Old Comical, at the next step, would have been in the bride's chamber.*)”

In the eleventh chapter of the first volume of “The Newcomes,” there is a semi-sentimental and semi-humorous description of how good little Miss Honeyman had prepared herself for her defiance of Mrs. Newcome: “Then she went to array herself in her best clothes, as we have seen—as we have heard rather (goodness forbid that we should *see* Miss Honeyman arraying herself, or penetrate that chaste mystery, her toilette!)”

Scores of such-like parallelisms might be cited. But there is also between these two men a likeness in unlikeness. As a rule, the author of “John Decastro” calls in the Solid Gentleman to curb the extravagancies of Old Comical. As a rule, Thackeray invokes his Comic Muse to prevent a dreaded lapse into sentimentality. “His pathos,” says an early critic of Thackeray, “is exquisite; the more so, perhaps, because he seems to struggle against it, and to be half-

Introduction

ashamed of being caught in the melting mood" (*Edinburgh Review*, January, 1818).

There is one famous man—at his maturity when "John Decastro" appeared—who bears some of the personal and mental traits that one might attribute to the unknown novelist. This was William Cobbett (1762-1835). In his vitality, his violence, his pugnacity, his independence, his obstreperous and extravagant humor, and particularly in his union of coarseness of language with purity of intent, Cobbett has much in common with "John Mathers." When I found, in "John Decastro" (Vol. I., page 300) that Old Comical makes a comparison of London to an "inposthume," I remembered Cobbett's favorite name for that city, the "Great Wen," and wondered if I had struck upon a clue to the authorship of the novel. Certainly Cobbett would have been far more likely than his contemporary Colman to publish a novel anonymously, if he had written one. Colman tried his hands at so many forms of imaginative literature—tragedy, comedy, farce, burlesque, ballad, and, shall I add, autobiography?—that there would have been nothing singular or startling in his attempting one more. The novel would have been a cumulative addition to his fame. In Cobbett's case it would have been a new and perilous departure. It might have injured his more serious reputation as a politician and a controversialist. Therefore it is easily comprehensible that he might have preferred an anonymous form of pub-

Introduction

lication, which would throw his many enemies off the track.

Nevertheless, second thoughts have been against this assumption. Cobbett was a writer of English which was severely and academically "good." He was the author of an excellent grammar. He was a purist, in short, and a trained man of letters.

The author of "John Decastro," on the other hand, gives evidences of amateurishness and inexperience. He writes brilliantly and forcefully, but carelessly. He has occasional difficulties with his past participles and his relative pronouns. His sentences are often long and involved, and sometimes, but not often, unintelligible, through sheer clumsiness in the handling.

Likewise he exhibits strange ignorances. One instance must suffice. On page 377 of the second volume in this edition there begins "The History of John Colbourne." That scoundrel, it appears, was really one Palestrozzzi, scion of a wealthy Florentine family, who, "bred to the church," had yet been simultaneously engaged to a young lady, the daughter of a "clergyman." Now it is supererogatory to point out that the Catholic was the only extant church in the Florence of the early eighteen hundreds, and that its "clergymen" were then, as now, bound to celibacy. Cobbett, the author of a "History of the Protestant Reformation," which altogether favors Catholicism, could never have made this mistake. Colman, who knew just enough about priests and friars to poke occa-

Introduction

sional clumsy fun at their celibacy, could hardly have made it.

In short, appearances all seem to indicate that "The History of Mr. John Decastro" was the first effort of some singularly robust and original man of genius, a student of men rather than of books, but by no means unread in the latter, a person probably of middle age and therefore past the acute period of vanity and self-deception, who threw it upon the world as an experiment, was disappointed at its apparent ill success and then retired into privacy, leaving unfulfilled the conditional promise given in his closing paragraph to write a sequel containing the later adventures of the Decastro family.

And if I were asked the reason of that ill success I should find it in the very period when the book was published. No principle of selection could have hit upon a more unfortunate time than the spring of 1815 for the issue of an English book by an unknown or anonymous author. Napoleon escaped from Elba on February 26, 1815; he was defeated at Waterloo on June 18, 1815. During all the intervening, and, indeed, the succeeding months, Great Britain, with all Europe, was in an uproar. Military reputations were the only reputations that were being made in that period. The public had no time for reading. Their attention was fixed upon the mighty drama in which the destinies of the world were involved.

To conclude with a short explanation of the "edi-

Introduction

torial" method that I have set before myself in this revival. I have conceived, in the first place, that it was no part of an editor's duties to tamper with either the soul or the body of a book whose vitality must preserve it a classic. Daniele da Volterra in the sixteenth century was known as the "Breeches-maker," because he continently clad a few of the naked in Michael Angelo's great fresco of "The Last Judgment." I am no new Daniel come to judgment. Expurgation is emasculation, whether it be practised upon Decastro or upon Shakespeare. A book that expresses the manners of its time must be left to speak in its own manner. This book is an extraordinary efflorescence from the jovial, genial, boisterous, and none too squeamish Merry England of the Georges. There is impropriety, but no immorality in even its wildest outbreaks.

Indeed our friend, the contemporary critic of the *New Monthly Magazine*, especially commends its morality, and compares it favorably in this respect with another anonymous novel that had come out in the same month—"Guy Mannering," to wit—in which he discerned great genius, but an unwholesome pandering to sensationalism.

Even a classic, however, can be modernized without losing an atom of its essential flavor. Shakespeare himself has been recast, re-spelled, re-punctuated. In this edition of "John Decastro" the long paragraphs which fatigue the modern eye have been cut into two, into three, into half a dozen. The dialogue has been

Introduction

broken up, in the sensible modern fashion, so that each speech from each interlocutor should have a paragraph to itself. Here and there turgid, involved, or ambiguous sentences have been straightened out into intelligibility. Here and there ugly repetitions have been weeded out. Typographical errors have been corrected. Obsolescent or obsolete words and phrases have been explained in footnotes.

The punctuation has been modernized, although with an extreme care that the cadence of the sentences should not be marred by too close an application of modern rules. For punctuation, where it is the author's and not the typo's, has its effect on the music of style. Even a comma may possess its phonetic value, as indicating a cæsura which appeals to the writer's ear.

It may be added that wherever a doubt arose in the course of this modernization, that doubt was resolved in favor of the original.

In fine, it has been the aim of both publisher and editor to present this "New Ormonde Edition" of "The History of Mr. John Decastro" in just the shape which the author would have approved were he still living in the flesh.

May his jocund ghost smile upon our efforts!

WILLIAM S. WALSH.

TO
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
THE EARL OF * * * * *

MY LORD: We have received your lordship's letter, together with the manuscript of our history, and beg to return you many thanks for the few alterations which your lordship has done us the honour to suggest: your being present at certain passages and transactions gave your lordship an advantage over us, and we take it very kind in you thus to have given us the benefit of it. Notwithstanding, however, your lordship's communications, there still remain some gaps in our history, which we hope, in some future edition of it, to have it in our power to fill up.

Your lordship has done us the honour to say in your letter, that you "not only give us your permission, but very much wish that the work be dedicated to you"; and that for this reason, viz.: "You would be glad to give your countenance to every reprimand on great people who set the world an ill example." Your lordship must just permit us to say that this is very noble in you, and we have not gone so far as to name your name, lest you should feel yourself too much praised in public by this quotation from your letter: now in regard to praise, we very well know that your lordship will be far better pleased with us if we tell you of your

Dedication

faults, and, to show how readily we would do any thing that were like to please you, we will name one in your lordship, you are too much ashamed of doing a good thing, for when you happen to be detected in doing one you are sure to be put out of countenance.—You do ill, my lord, in taking so much pains to hide yourself: we may speak the more boldly since we name not your name—and, in order to it, we shall add, that it is a fault in your lordship to show the world so little of your example: you do not do your duty by yourself in thinking so meanly of yourself, nor by your neighbour in withholding any good thing from him. Your lordship says in your letter that “Nothing is more wanted than severe reproof and good example amongst great folks,” and, that “Old Crab should be brought to London and made to preach at St. James’s.”—You have it in your power, my lord, to do more good than any pulpit, though planted all round with Old Crab’s artillery, you mix very much with great folks when you come to town, which no man can do by going to church in it.

We have the honour to subscribe ourselves,

My Lord,

Notwithstanding all your faults,

Nevertheless, your lordship’s

Very humble servants

JOHN MATHERS

and

The SOLID GENTLEMAN

THE
HISTORY OF MR. JOHN DECASTRO

CHAPTER I

How Mr. Decastro had a great fortune, but too little money.

IF Mr. Decastro's wants were his masters he made but a very bad servant. It hath been said to be no easy matter for one man to serve two, how could Mr. Decastro be expected then to serve two thousand? He did his best, however, for some time, but soon got out at heel and out at elbow. This comes of letting mad folks go loose in the world. Mr. Decastro, however, had now and then a lucid interval, and by the light of one of these said lucid intervals he saw one day this thing: viz. that although he had a great fortune he had too little money.

Now his brother Bartholomew, a man of a sour turn, and upon that account called OLD CRAB, was one of another kidney; he had a little fortune and too much: so they did their best to keep up that variety which makes this world so very pleasant. Now be it known, that Old Crab took his brother's rents and paid his bills for him as far as money went, and no further, and that for a very good reason.

The History of Mr. John Decastro

“Brother John,” quoth Old Crab one day to him, in a loud voice, “thou’rt outrunning the constable.”

“Outrunning the devil! brother Bat,” quoth he.

“No,” quoth Old Crab, “not the devil, but the constable: to outrun the devil will be no such easy matter: you will get his claws on your back one day, if you have not a care. You and your gang have been kicking up a fine dust here in London, this last year, with your balls, cards, and fiddles, and the devil knows what—I can’t pay your bills.”

“Can’t pay my bills, brother Bat!” said Mr. Decastro, with a great stare.

“No,” quoth Old Crab, rising upon his toes, as his manner was, as if he would fly at a man, “I can’t pay your bills, I say; art deaf, John?”

“Better be deaf than hear bad news,” quoth he. “How stands the account, brother Bat?”

“Five thousand pounds upon the wrong side, brother John.”

Upon which Mr. Decastro doubled his fist, gave a great knock upon the table, and swore seven great oaths that came out of his mouth as if he had taken an emetic: we would set the oaths down if we were not afraid to raise the devil, and frighten the old ladies.

“Don’t you swear sometimes, brother John?” quoth Old Crab.

“I never swore an oath in my life, brother Bat.”

“No!” quoth Old Crab, “what d’ye call G— d— my blood?”

“An unguarded expression,” quoth Mr. Decastro, and fell to swearing again worse than before.

“Brother John,” quoth Old Crab, coming in between the claps of thunder, “hard words pay no bills; it were

The History of Mr. John Decastro

well if you could swear yourself out of debt, but that is no such easy matter: a word with you by and by upon swearing: in the mean time, a word upon your worldly matters; you have an income of twenty thousand pounds a year, and cannot make both ends meet; the devil is in it if this be not enough to buy meat, drink, and cloth, for a man's family if he had a wife that bred like a rabbit:—you have only two children, brother John, and have got some gravel in your shoes already; you will get into jail, you blockhead."

Mr. Decastro asked him, with an oath, if he got all the rents paid in the north, where his estates lay.

"Never made a better gathering, John," quoth Old Crab; "there was a little behind last time, but all's paid up to a penny, and that's more than your tradesmen can say, the worse luck for them, brother John."

"You look at me as if I could help it, brother Bat; if there's no more money the rascals must wait."

"But they will not wait," quoth Old Crab; "they say you're a young man, and it will do you good to stop you in time."

"They're devilish kind when their own interest lies in the way to serve a man; they will arrest me?"

"There are three of them that only wait to see me again, brother John, and if I come empty-handed they will put executions into your house, they bade me tell you so."

"A civil message!" said Mr. Decastro.

"A civil fool's head!" quoth Old Crab; "I tell you I have got no more money, what am I to do? drive the disease from one joint to another, borrow?"

"What's five thousand pounds to a man of my property?" said Mr. Decastro; "It is but the prick of a

The History of Mr. John Decastro

pin, though it smarted a little at first; borrow the money, brother Bat, and pay the scoundrels directly."

"I have done it," quoth Old Crab, "it was but to return it if you did not agree to it."

"Why didn't you tell me so," said Mr. Decastro; "what is the good of making a man fret?"

"Some bad liquors get better by fretting; I had a mind to try the experiment upon your constitution," quoth Old Crab. "Now, look you, brother John, I have promised to pay this money back again next year with five per cent. interest, so that will come upon the shoulders of the next year, it will add to the weight of the next year's expenses—this by way of memorandum, be frugal." Old Crab was a parson, so a little preaching came very well in character. "Brother John," said he, "you have got a sad trick of swearing, leave it off, it is vulgar and wicked."

"It may be vulgar," said Mr. Decastro, "but it gives a man ease, and many other vulgar things do the like: but as to being wicked, nobody knows what that word means but you parsons."

"Dost know the reason?" quoth Old Crab.

"No," said Mr. Decastro, "what is it?"

"Because, brother John, thou art an ass."

"You parsons," said Mr. Decastro, "tell men they are wicked, as doctors tell men they are sick, and sell as much nauseous stuff for the soul as they do for the body, to answer the same end, *videlicet*, to pick people's pockets."

"The more fool you, brother John," quoth Old Crab, "to call in both the physician and the parson when you lay sick of a fever: but more of this another time. I leave London to-morrow for the north, so give us

The History of Mr. John Decastro

thine hand, brother John: be careful;—and remember these words:” upon which Old Crab took a bit of chalk out of his pocket, and wrote the following short sentence upon a large mahogany door, in letters big enough for a man to creep through,

“BE FRUGAL,”

and, shaking hands with his brother John, left the room.

CHAPTER II

How Mrs. Decastro called the Butler to get the Chalk wiped off the Door—Some Account of Old Crab—How Mrs. Decastro loved him as the devil loves Holy Water—What happened when Old Crab came to Town the next year.

As soon as Old Crab was gone out of the room Mrs. Decastro came into it, for she heard him go, and so might any who could hear a clap of thunder; for his loud voice, his thick boots, and his heavy oaken towel,* made altogether a monstrous noise.

“What is this?” said she, looking at the chalk on the door. Upon which Mr. Decastro explained matters.

“What a vulgar beast it is,” said she, which compliment was meant for Old Crab. “I wish, my dear, you would get something in the likeness of a human being to do your business for you, and turn this huge bear out of the house.” Old Crab was a man of vast stature.

“Can you find an honest man, my dear,” said Mr. Decastro, “that will take all the trouble for nothing as brother Bat does?”

“Well,” said she, “I had rather pay and be cheated than be plagued with that great bear. Petticraft the attorney offered his services when we began house-keeping, take Mr. Petticraft and turn Old Crab out.”

* A now obsolete slang term for a cudgel. Similarly, a lead towel was a bullet. See Century Dictionary under “towel.”—*Editor’s Note.*

The History of Mr. John Decastro

“We had best not be more nice than wise,” said Mr. Decastro, taking his wife by the chin, as his custom was. “Brother Bat is a little rough, but he has our interest at heart, and is an honest man; he lives amongst my tenants too, knows all the customs and rules of the estates, their value, their boundaries, the laws of all the manors, and of all landed property; is an excellent farmer and has an eye to the management of my lands; all my tenants respect and fear him, and dare as soon eat their fingers as use me or my property ill while he looks after it:—turn Brother Bat out!—I shall turn myself out if I do. He takes all the trouble for nothing, will not take one penny for his pains; think of that, my dear.”

“I hate Old Crab as bad as the devil,” said she; “he never comes into the house but he sets all our teeth on edge for a month! railing and scolding and calling to order, as if he was father of us all. Your father never could abide him, or he would not have disinherited him, and gave all to you, my dear.”

“It was a rash act in my father,” said Mr. Decastro, “though we come in for the advantage of it; my father was hot, and Bat would speak his mind. No man could do more to be revenged on a son than disinherit him; but no man could feel it less than brother Bat. He is content to live upon a little, and even finds that little too much; he rents a good farm of me it is true, but, besides that, he has nothing but the small rectory of Oaken Grove which I gave him, and he puts by a penny for his daughter every year, notwithstanding.”

“Aye,” said Mrs. Decastro, “such a pinchback would live upon a flint and save money by skinning it at the year’s end; that it is which sets him a snarling at us

The History of Mr. John Decastro

that live in the world like other folks. Mr. Perrings," said she, calling to the butler who was in the next room, "send a housemaid with some soap and water to wash this door, here is some filth or other upon it." The butler looked at the door and left the room with a smile.

A few words more upon Old Crab. He was the eldest son of old Mr. Decastro by a former wife, and though he was, from the harshness of his manners and the hard favour of his visage, called Old Crab, he was not at this period more than five-and-forty. His humour was to abuse a man to his face and do him a good turn behind his back. He was disinherited by his father, as hath been said, upon a quarrel, and sent to be educated at Göttingen in Germany; in which university he became so great a scholar that many whose reputations lay that way could have found in their hearts to have cut his throat. But such was his cast of temper that he was as much feared as admired. He stood in awe of none, bold in speech, and laid about him if any gainsaid him, without respect of persons. All allowed that he was a great ornament to the university, but many secretly wished him hanged with all their souls. He got expelled from this place for a satire written in the Latin tongue upon some of the ruling men in the university. On his arrival in England he found his father and mother both dead. His father's fine feelings for the dignity of the family made him a good allowance abroad, out of which he had, in the course of a few years, saved enough to stock a farm which he took of his brother at Oaken Grove in Cumberland, where much of the family possessions lay. He had written several books in the Latin and German

The History of Mr. John Decastro

languages, which, having been translated and published in England, had gained him much repute before he came back to his native country: one, a tract in divinity, took the attention of the Bishop of —, who gave him a hint by means of a friend, that if he would take orders he would get his brother to give him the living of Oaken Grove. His rude and savage manners offended most people who did not know him, and some who did; but he was a man that abounded in good qualities, and was of great service to many both in his own family and out of it.

He brought home with him a Swiss lady, whom he had married, a very excellent woman, by whom he had ten children, one of which only, and that the youngest, lived, her name was Julia, who far excelled her very handsome mother in beauty, of whom we shall have something more to say.

Bartholomew Decastro, alias Old Crab, was a very strict and good divine, but preached rather satires than sermons, and would scold his congregation. In addition to his learning, which was admirable, he had great store of useful knowledge in all worldly matters, and certainly saved his brother John, and his brother-in-law the Earl of Budemere, from ruin. Old Crab would be as much out of humour with himself as with others, if not more so; he used to say, the man that pleaseth himself pleaseth a fool. No man held money in more contempt than he; it gathered about him, however, as if in spite of him, such was the economy, such the frugality of him and his excellent wife. Fortune put some temptations in his way, but Old Crab growled at her whenever she held out her favours. He was a good farmer, and made a great deal of money of the land

The History of Mr. John Decastro

which he rented of his brother John. His farm was as neat as a garden, and his house as clean as a penny; for what he was abroad his wife was at home, who was almost the only person he never quarrelled with. She was as sweet as sugar, he as sour as vinegar; and, odd as it may look, they were a very affectionate couple.

One thing more:—on New-Year's day Old Crab held what he called his Guinea Feast. Every farthing which he owed in the world was punctually paid before the 31st of December, and on the 1st of January he always invited his friends to dine with him, when there arose a little erection in the middle of the table with a small stage at the top of it made of glass, upon which a golden guinea was mounted in the sight of all, with a little label put round it, on which was written, in letters of gold,

“THIS GUINEA IS MY OWN!”

At Lady-day* Old Crab always came to London to pay his brother's bills, manage his aunt Biddy's money matters, and a variety of other business.

A year had now passed since he had seen his brother John, and when he came to London he found him a thing a great deal more worth looking at than he was a year ago, for he looked a great deal more like a fool, and that's a thing which is not seen above once in an hundred years. When Old Crab came to London he

* March 25th, the feast of the Annunciation. In England the day has lost most of its religious importance since the Reformation, but has enjoyed financial consideration for centuries as the first quarter-day in the year for rents and other payments. The other pay-days are Midsummer, June 24th, Michaelmas, Sept. 29th, and Christmas.—*Editor's Note.*

The History of Mr. John Decastro

always put up at the Old Hummums in Covent Garden, a place where a man may have what sleep he likes but no victuals. How came this when his brother had a house in town? Mr. Decastro's hours did not at all suit Old Crab. How came this when Old Crab's brother-in-law, the Earl of Budemere, had a house in town? Lord Budemere's hours did not suit Old Crab, neither was his company much to his liking. Now if Mr. Decastro had played the devil the year before, he had played the devil and his dam in the last, that is to say he and his wife together, who, instead of making the memorable sentence which Old Crab chalked up on the drawing-room door the rule of their conduct, and a better was not to be seen upon the door at Delphos, had squirted money away like kennel water. Old Crab soon found how matters had gone on, so he put his brother's money into the banker's hands, and, having done what he had to do, he left London and his brother John to settle their accounts as well as they could. Petticraft the lawyer was the first man to smell a rat, who ran to Mr. Decastro's house with an empty bag in his hand to fetch the five thousand pounds which had been borrowed of him, and five per cent. now growing thereupon. After Petticraft had got wind, for he had run himself out of breath, Mr. Decastro and he thus talked together, *videlicet*:

“What d'ye want, Mr. Petticraft?”

“I want my money, sir.”

“What's that to me? go to my brother.”

“Go to the devil! your brother will not pay **any** more bills.”

“Not pay any more bills!”

“Not pay any more bills.”

The History of Mr. John Decastro

“Who put that into your head?”

“He did, he told me so himself:—and you too, I warrant.”

“I have not seen him.”

“Then you are not like to see him; he is gone out of town:—I am come to you for my money.”

“You have brought your pitcher to the wrong pump: I want money as bad as you.”

“I will have my money.”

“I must have it before I can pay it. My brother’s gone out of town!”

“Yes:—he bade me tell the tradespeople that they might come to you for their money if they wanted it—he would pay no more bills: so I thought I had as good come for my money first and tell them the news afterwards: the news comes pleasantly from a man who has got nothing upon his mind. Your brother told me that he had left your money at the old place—give me a check upon your banker—there is one ready drawn, you need only put your name in the corner.”

Mr. Decastro did so, and Petticraft left the house with a glad heart and a cheerful countenance; but he carried all the gladness out of the house and left none for Mr. Decastro, who fell into a fit of the dumps. If a man’s wife cannot cheer him up, and make him merry, who can? In came Mrs. Decastro and asked her husband if he had got the belly-ache?

“Curse the belly-ache,” said he.

“Aye,” said she, “this comes of drinking such strong green tea for your breakfast.”

Upon which she rung the bell, and ordered Mr. Perrings to bring his master a glass of brandy: the butler returned in a moment with a glass of brandy put

The History of Mr. John Decastro

upon a silver waiter worth a thousand guineas: who could not have taken a dose of physic off such a waiter and smacked his lips after it? As soon as the brandy came within the length of Mr. Decastro's leg he kicked the waiter and the brandy fifteen feet high and called Mr. Perrings a scoundrel.

Now there was great ringing and knocking heard at Mr. Decastro's street door, bills came in like a storm against a wall, and Mr. Decastro drew upon his banker like a dragon; at last he drew a bill which the banker could not answer, and for this reason, viz. he had no more money: so the man who came last drew a blank, and he was not the only one. Mr. Decastro had not paid half what he owed before the cat was gone and her skin too, as folks say. It would have puzzled a wiser man than Mr. Decastro to pay a bill without money, so those whom he could not pay in money he paid in promises; a sort of payment that is not in full of all demands. Now what Mr. Decastro had not in him people could not get out of him, so a great many of the civilest of his tradesmen, for the saucy ones came first, were forced to sit down gentlemen of the future tense, videlicet, those that *shall* or *will* be paid.

Time ran on as fast as Mr. Decastro ran in debt, and brought round another year with all the incumbrances of the former two upon its back added to its own. At Lady-day Old Crab came as usual, paid his brother's rents into the banker's hands, and left town without seeing him; he had already seen more than was good of him. When a man gets well into the mud the exertion one uses to draw one leg up sinks the other still deeper than it was before. This was Mr. Decastro's case, for the first step he took when he got his money

The History of Mr. John Decastro

from the north was to pay the civil men who had been so polite as to take promises instead of cash the last year; now when these were all paid there was nothing left for the saucy ones, who came about Mr. Decastro's head and ears like a nest of hornets. Old Crab had an eye upon his brother, and knew how he was going on.

"Nothing will cure this crack-brained coxcomb but a good smarting," quoth he; "John is not in parliament this time, for the electors did not get drunk and of course did not choose him, so the next visit I pay him may be in jail."

Petticraft the lawyer told Old Crab how matters went on from time to time.

CHAPTER III

How Old Crab changed his mind—His talk with his Brother John—How Mrs. Decastro beat the breath out of her Husband's body.

ANOTHER Lady-day came and brought Old Crab to London as of old:—

“How stand matters with brother John?” quoth he to Petticraft.

“He has left off playing the devil,” quoth Petticraft, “to play a worse game.”

“I am glad to hear that the blockhead is mending his hand,” quoth Old Crab.

“Go once more to the house and see what can be done for him,” said Petticraft; “I have borrowed money for him or he had been put into jail.”

“So you said last year,” quoth Old Crab; “hast borrowed any more since that time?”

“I have,” said Petticraft, “and more the last time than ever I did before.”

“How much?” said Old Crab.

“Ten thousand pounds,” said Petticraft.

“Very good,” quoth Old Crab, “this makes fifty thousand pounds?”

“It does,” said he.

“Well,” said Old Crab, “I will go and call on the blockhead once more, and try if I can get him into my plans.”

Upon which Old Crab went to his brother's house,

The History of Mr. John Decastro

and raising his oaken towel gave the door three bangs that shook the garrets. Mrs. Decastro, and her sister-in-law, Lady Budemere, who were sitting at their breakfast, said the Park and Tower guns were firing, and Mrs. Decastro rang the bell to ask what news were come. A footman, for Mr. Decastro kept a world of servants, who ran up-stairs to answer the bell, opened the door and let Old Crab into the room. Mrs. Decastro and Lady Budemere started out of their chairs at his appearance, and looked like two people that were very much terrified.

“Sit still and eat your victuals,” quoth Old Crab; “where’s brother John? I would speak a word with him if you can find him.”

“He is getting up,” said Mrs. Decastro, “we expect him to come to breakfast presently.”

“Getting up!” quoth Old Crab; “why, ‘tis almost two o’clock; does the fellow lie in bed all day?”

Mr. Decastro now came in, and whether the ladies had finished their breakfast, or not, we could never get any good intelligence; we think it most prudent, therefore, to say nothing about the matter; they made the best of their way out of the room, however, and left Mr. Decastro and Old Crab at each other’s mercy. When a man comes into a room and finds a thing in it which he never expected to see, he falls into great astonishment.

“Brother John,” quoth Old Crab, without giving him time to recover his senses, “you are going, I find, upon a full gallop to the devil; I am come here to stop you one moment upon the road, just to ask you one question before you take the last plunge: have you or have you not a mind to be saved from perdition?”

The History of Mr. John Decastro

“I have,” said Mr. Decastro, letting his lower jaw fall and looking as white as a sheet.

“Then,” said Old Crab, “you must get out of London.”

“Get out of London!” said he, “where would you have me go?”

“Why, not into that fool’s paradise, Gimcrack Hall, in Berkshire; come into the north and live amongst your tenants, where a landlord ought to be, in the old family castle at Oaken Grove: I have taken care to keep the place from falling to pieces, a little money would make it comfortable, and as for the furniture it is none the worse.”

“I shall not be able to live in such a great place,” said he, “I am afraid to tell you my reasons.”

“It is very like,” quoth Old Crab; “but out of this place you shall come, and out of your profligate gang here, that will eat you out of house and home and laugh at you when they have done, if the devil come out of hell to pull against me; I am come to a mind not to stand by and see you ruined: so I told your lawyer I would change my mind, and come once more to see if any thing can be done for you.”

“O brother Bat!” said Mr. Decastro, covering his eyes with his hand, “you are come too late, I am ruined already! I don’t know what it is that I owe, and am afraid to ask!—But I cannot come into the north.”

“You shall come into the north,” thundered Old Crab, “if I carry you there upon a pitchfork! The old family castle shall not be forsaken; say me nay, and I will break your bones to save your soul and body from everlasting damnation: come into the library, we

The History of Mr. John Decastro

shall have the women here presently, I would have a little talk with you."

Upon which Old Crab seized his brother by the arm, as a kite would a lark by the wing, and off he carried him, with as much ease, into the library. Having shut the door, he read him a lecture that lasted two hours, the subject of which was profligacy, atheism, and bad company. Few men like to be told of their faults: Mr. Decastro, however, was prepared for his lecture, for he had sometime found that his life was wrong, which was proved by an argument that few could contradict—the ill effects of it. Old Crab scolded furiously at the vices of the age, and went so far as to call a great many of Mr. Decastro's friends the devil's imps. He objected to his brother, his balls, masquerades, concerts, conversations, and card parties on Sunday nights, and told him that full houses made empty pockets: to prove the truth of which Mr. Decastro had nothing more to do than just to put his hands into his own. In regard to his affairs, Old Crab told him that he knew enough to say that his house in town and his country-seat in Berkshire must be sold, but how much of the property in the north must be sacrificed he could not tell.

"Ah brother Bat!" said Mr. Decastro, with a rueful countenance, "when you come to know how many fathom deep I am in debt you will find, when all is paid, we may run naked into the woods and live upon pig-nuts. Live amongst my tenants! when all my bills are paid I may live amongst other people's if I can get any bread to eat; but you will have no easy matter to bring me to live amongst my own."

"Brother John," quoth Old Crab, "we cannot tell

The History of Mr. John Decastro

how bad matters may be till we come to probe your wounds; your estates will be sadly mangled I doubt; but I have one thing to tell you, out of London you must go, or your body will be laid by the heels in it."

"O, I am a ruined man!" said Mr. Decastro; and clapping his hands one on each side of his head, with his elbows raised in a straight line from his shoulders, and his eyes to the ceiling, he had a mind to make his way out of the room through a door of solid oak which his wife opened just in time to prevent his dashing his head against it, not a little astonished at meeting her husband in the odd attitude aforesaid. She stept aside or he would have run her down, and forth he marched like one frantic.

"What's the matter now?" said Mrs. Decastro, staring at Old Crab; "I wish you would get you gone into the north, you never come here but you disturb my family."

"When the house is on fire 'tis high time to disturb the family," quoth he.

"House on fire!" said she, "what do you mean by that?"

"Mean! why, you and your husband have made the house too hot to hold you—so you must turn out, madam," quoth Old Crab.

"Turn out!" said she.

"Turn out," quoth he in a thundering voice.

One cannot see in the dark certainly, but when one gets too much light it is just as bad the other way; so one cannot hear any thing when there is no noise, and when there is a great deal one is struck deaf, which was Mrs. Decastro's case at this moment, for Old Crab spoke loud enough to be heard from London to St. Albans. Mrs. Decastro was struck dumb, too, as well as

The History of Mr. John Decastro

deaf, for she said nothing. She had a magnificent house in town, and the words "turn out" gave her a fit of the colic. Eve cried when she was turned out of Paradise for none of her best qualities; but if she had been turned out of such a fine house as Mrs. Decastro enjoyed in Grosvenor-square she would have gone mad.

Old Crab went on to give some reasons why she must turn out, but spoke too loud to be heard. The human faculties have an odd way of accommodating themselves to emergencies, which, after a little, was the case with Mrs. Decastro's ears. Old Crab told her that she and her husband had run to the end of their string:—that their vices began to knock at their doors:—that pay-day was come;—and that what Mr. Decastro could not pay in money he must pay in land and houses. He told her that they had kept more company than the house would hold, for there was no longer any room for the master and mistress in it; and ended as he began that she must turn out. These words were spoken by Old Crab in a voice as loud as thunder; it was quite impossible for Mrs. Decastro, and to give her her due she made several attempts, to interrupt him; her voice might as well be heard at the falls of Niagara: but as soon as there was a pause, she jumped up from off a sofa on which she had flung her body in a passion, and told Old Crab that he had come into the house on purpose to turn it out o' window, that all he had said was false, and ended her speech with calling him a great bear! At that word she bounced out of the room; and, making a furious exit, casting an eye of vengeance on Old Crab, ran full upon her husband's stomach, who came into the room at that moment, and beat the breath out of his body.

CHAPTER IV

How Mr. Decastro called in his debts—Mr. and Mrs. Decastro's Skill in Arithmetic—Mr. Decastro runs away in the middle of the Night.

We left Mr. Decastro at the end of the last chapter without any breath in his body, being violently struck by Mrs. Decastro's person without being much in love with her—he got a terrible knock—what a sad thing it is sometimes for a man and wife to come together!

"What d'ye think of that, brother?" quoth Mr. Decastro, sucking up his breath.

"Think!" quoth Old Crab, with a grin of indignation, "why, I think there are so many fools in the house that one can't open a door without tumbling over another. What brings you back?"

"I am come to ask what had best be done?" said he.

"Done!" quoth Old Crab.. "Why, you must call your debts in, and when you have found what you owe, you must look what you have got to pay them with."

Mr. Decastro was a very good sort of a gentleman in the main, but he had this one fault among others, viz., he was very obstinate, not in the right, for that would not have been so bad, but in the wrong, and that was not so well. Old Crab, seeing what a fine trade his brother was driving, had advised with him from

The History of Mr. John Decastro

time to time to leave London and come into the north; but all he could do or say was equally in vain, he had as good pull against a mountain that were rolling down a precipice. Give a wild horse his head and he will sometimes stand still of his own accord. Old Crab tried this plan with his brother, but with this difference—he threw something in his way to frighten him, which was his ruin in this world and another. This world, however, was the most to Mr. Decastro's purpose at present, the other seemed to be too far off to have many terrors, so Old Crab spurred his creditors on, who came about him in a full gallop like a troop of horse, and charged him with their bills in a very gallant manner; having done which Old Crab left London, and orders with Petticraft to tell him how matters went on.

Mr. Decastro took his brother's advice for once and made a great calling for accounts. Now a bill is a thing that will come without a man's calling his heart out after it. Mr. Decastro, however, made a most monstrous calling all on a sudden, and his creditors began to think that he had found a great pot of money somewhere, and everybody would be paid twenty shillings in the pound down upon the nail. This acted like a paregoric for a little time, but only served to make them more restless afterwards. Mr. and Mrs. Decastro were seated in the library, and every farthing which they owed on earth lay in mountains of paper upon the table before them.

“Now, my dear,” said he to his wife, “I would give a penny to know what it is that I owe in all.”

There had been a little blunder made in Mr. Decastro's education, for it chanced that amongst all other

The History of Mr. John Decastro

useful things he had not been taught arithmetic. To do justice to his parents, however, a writing-master was sent for, and he was put to accounts. Hearing him cry, his mother came in one day, and asked what was the matter? "Master don't like figures, madam," said the schoolmaster. "You have not been whipping my child, I hope, sir?" said his mother. "No, madam," said he. "Nasty figures," said she; so the writing-master was sent out of the house, and his mother filled the boy's mouth with sugar-candy.

"My dear," said Mr. Decastro to his wife, "I would give a penny to know what it is that I owe in all: suppose we go to work, and see if we can make it out between us"; and to work they went one morning, and soon got into such a puzzle that they scarce knew their right hand from their left! Having heard that wonderful things come from great exertions, they went to work again after dinner, and kept on summing until five o'clock the next day, when they came to a grand total which frightened them both out of their wits; for they had made it out that Mr. Decastro owed more money than would pay off the national debt. Mrs. Decastro wrung her hands; Mr. Decastro gave himself a dismal blow on the forehead, and they went to bed very well satisfied in one thing, viz., that they were ruined.

The morrow happened to be Sunday, a day in which all tradesmen's shops, and books, and mouths are shut as far as business and money matters go, which made it a day of rest to Mr. and Mrs. Decastro, who thought they might as well sleep in their beds as at church, so they staid at home and slept soundly without the help of a sermon. This made Mr. Decastro fresh for the

The History of Mr. John Decastro

affairs of the next night, when he put some things into a portmanteau in the middle watch, took a servant and a couple of horses, and rode out of the gayest city in the world as if it had been all on fire, leaving a note to inform Mrs. Decastro that he was gone on business into the north.

CHAPTER V

How Mr. Decastro was converted to Christianity—How Mrs. Decastro sat upon thorns in London—A description of Oaken Grove.

MR. DECASTRO had been twice at church in his life—when he was christened, and when he was married, which was once more than most of his acquaintance. As for religion he never thought about it, and none of his friends ever put it into his head, or took it into their own, except Old Crab—but more of this presently.

We must now attend Mr. Decastro upon his journey, on which, whatever leather he might lose, he lost no time. He had an excellent horse, and his groom as good, and they galloped away like smoke before the wind. After a great deal of galloping they galloped at last into Old Crab's farm-yard.

"Brother John," quoth he, putting his head out of window, "what the devil brought you here?"

"Look ye, brother Bat," said he, "if ever I go to London again I will gallop through hell to it!—I have been ruined in it: I have called in all my bills and cast up all, and if my estates were ten times as many and fifty times the worth, and all sold at the best hand, they would not pay half of what I owe!—Hide me, brother Bat, hide me from the world! for I am a beggar."

At which words the poor gentleman wept. Old

The History of Mr. John Decastro

Crab knew his brother to be in some very great mistake, but was willing to make the best of it, and said: "Look you, brother John, this comes of not taking my advice in time: if those words which I chalked up upon your door, some years ago, had been made the rule of your conduct, you had no cause to sit by my fireside with your stupid head between your knees sniv'ling like a blockhead."

"Do not abuse a man in distress, brother Bat," said he, sobbing. "O that you had never been disinherited! O that I had never come to the estates! I might have lived frugally, like you, upon a little, and never come to want and beggary!"

"Hold up your head, you fool, and answer me some questions: you have called in your debts, you say, and cast up all that you owe; what is the total?"

When Mr. Decastro named the sum Old Crab fell a laughing. Mr. Decastro said it was inhuman to laugh at his miseries, however he might deserve them all.

"You blockhead," quoth Old Crab, "you are only fit to be laughed at; you have called in your debts you say, and cast all up; have you taken any steps towards the payment of them?"

"None," said he; "for seeing the impossibility of my ever being able to pay one half of them, I ran away from my creditors in the night. O brother Bat, tell me what it is that you are worth, for I, my wife, and my two babes must depend on you for our bread! Your farm must be sold—the creditors will have all."

"If my farm is to be sold I will buy it," quoth Old Crab, "and if your creditors come here I will break their bones."

The History of Mr. John Decastro

"You buy it!" said Mr. Decastro, "how can you buy it?"

"That's neither here nor there," quoth Old Crab; "I have put a penny by, but that's neither here nor there.—I'll break their bones, I tell you, if they come here, a pack of tawdry scoundrels that are ruining their own families to live like such profligate dogs as yourself! Come, John, hold up your head and dry your tears; if you will promise to follow my advice, I may do something for you which you little expect: have you brought your papers with you?"

"I have," said he, staring eagerly at Old Crab, as a drowning man at one who holds out a hand to save him.

"Well, we will look into them after dinner," which was now put upon the table, "and see how matters will be," said Old Crab.—"Come, John, draw your chair, here's a round of beef of my own feeding, you are heartily welcome—let us have no more sniv'ling."

Mrs. B. Decastro now came in, and her daughter Julia, about ten years of age, one of the most beautiful little girls that ever was seen. Old Crab's wife and daughter were new to Mr. Decastro, for this was the first visit that he had ever paid his brother in the north. He had not felt himself so much at his ease for some time, and, notwithstanding the sore places in his mind, he fell to the boiled beef, carrots, cabbage, and potatoes, and ate like a man that had come off a long journey. The neatness and comfort of Old Crab's house, and his calm and cheerful fireside, where the crackling of the billets made all the disturbance, very much soothed Mr. Decastro's troubled spirit, and he felt like a sailor who had got into a snug harbour after the driv-

The History of Mr. John Decastro

ing and tossing of some dreadful storm. He was much pleased with the soft engaging manners of Mrs. Decastro, and little Julia did every thing she could to make her uncle welcome. As soon as the maid-servant had taken the dinner away, which consisted of a noble round of beef, vegetables, and a hot apple-pie, "Come, brother John," quoth Old Crab, "I have no Burgundy or claret for you, but can bring you a bottle of as good old port as any in England, and what will give it a better relish," added he, drawing the cork, "it is paid for."

That touched poor Mr. Decastro in one of his sorest places; he took a glass of wine, however, by way of a cordial, and said he had never tasted a better in any of the best taverns in London.

"Now, brother John," quoth Old Crab, "we will come to business. I never keep any secrets from my wife, so you may speak your mind before Rachel."

Little Julia, who had begun to look to the dairy, now made her courtesy and retired to her occupation. Mrs. B. Decastro, a woman of tender feelings, often shed tears while Old Crab and his brother were talking their matters over. The papers were now opened, and Old Crab soon made an entry of all Mr. Decastro's debts in a fair copy-book, but did not at that time point out the blunders in his brother's calculations, willing to make the best of his terrors, and turn them to his advantage.

The time of the year was now at hand for Old Crab's journey to London, and he began to prepare matters accordingly: and we think Old Crab placed no little confidence in his wife's virtue to leave a man of good person and of such loose principles as Mr. Decastro in his house during his absence, which was like to be of

The History of Mr. John Decastro

longer duration than time than it had ever been before upon account of his brother's affairs. Now to have seduced his brother's wife at the very moment he was engaged in his service, and that of so much importance too, were just the very sort of gratitude which a man of the world was in duty bound to show his friend: and what is the use of friendship if all things are not common among friends? Mr. Decastro, however, was never more remiss in any matter; one reason might be, and a very extraordinary one it was, Reader, that before Old Crab set out for the south a very remarkable event took place, which was none other than the conversion of Mr. Decastro to Christianity, for he had much talk with his brother on religious matters, which ended in bringing him over to the Christian faith; and indeed Mr. Decastro had hitherto been little better than an atheist. Now having so many good things about him he certainly had as much to be thankful for as any man, and that makes for the wonder of the matter that the richest men should be, for the most part, the least religious. That a man who hath the most good things in this world, should be the least thankful, looks a little odd; but Mr. Decastro never said "thank ye" for any thing that heaven had been so good as to give him. He had been christened, it is true, and godfathers and godmothers had promised and vowed very good things in his name, but it had been to very little purpose; he was as much an heathen as the dog-ribbed Indian.

Old Crab had touched him upon religious matters before now, but could never get him in a mind to lend an ear to grave stuff, as he used to call religion with a sneer, which none made any account of but such as

filled their pockets and their bellies by it, and was fain to leave him after a few bitter invectives. Some men are made good upon the spur of evil, or, at least, are often predisposed by it to become so; and Old Crab did not let slip so favourable an opportunity to round his brother a little in the ear upon this subject at the present moment. Mr. Decastro, amongst other unfortunate qualities, had a very high conceit of his own abilities, which led him to conclude that if he met with an argument which he could not answer, nobody else could do it. Old Crab made his advantage of this matter, and so ill a thing as self-conceit was seldom brought to so good a use. Old Crab opened a plan of works against his brother's infidelity, and brought his artillery to bear upon his profligate and vicious life, and beat down every defence of his conduct by charging his brother home with the ill effects of it, who soon found himself too much within shot to stand his ground for a moment upon this subject.

In regard to religious matters, Mr. Decastro began to argue with his brother at first, but soon ran aground, and no wonder, where more able men than himself had come to a stand before him. He stared at Old Crab like one in amazement, and began to think him a very extraordinary person who could bring so many arguments into the field which he could no more conquer than overthrow mountains. It may look a little odd that Mr. Decastro should owe his conversion to Christianity so much to his self-conceit: but he took it for granted that every argument must needs be true which he could not prove to be false. Old Crab followed him up and brought him at last to listen to his instructions with all the silent attention of a child.

The History of Mr. John Decastro

“Upon my soul,” said Mr. Decastro, “I had no idea that these parsons had so much to say for themselves”; and began to think, and wisely enough, that it would be no disparagement to his abilities to be convinced by the same arguments, and believe in the same things which a Newton, an Addison, and a Locke, had been convinced by, and believed in, before him. Old Crab now put some good books into his brother’s hands, which gave great furtherance to his arguments, and left him to meditate upon, and to digest, what had been said. He then set off for London, armed at all points, to meet Mr. Decastro’s creditors.

The talking about London puts us in mind that we have left a distressed lady in that gay city, to whose relief Old Crab was coming, like a knight errant, with all speed. Now a lady in distress is usually pitied by most men and some women; a good deal, however, depends upon the sort of distress, and the manner in which it comes: it came to pass in Mrs. Decastro’s case, that she not only got no pity from many, but some were heartily glad to hear that her husband was run away from his creditors and was ruined; and so kind were many that they not only did not wish that her troubles were less, but, on the other hand, wished they were ten times as many: this was a little ill-natured, it was nevertheless very true for all that.

To explain this, the splendour of Mr. Decastro’s fortune, the magnificence of his establishment, and the grandeur of his entertainments, raised him high enough in the world of all conscience if he could have been content without bringing pride to top the building. That thing gave folks much offence; add to which a saucy triumph over others, who, in an attempt to rival

The History of Mr. John Decastro

his extravagance, either ruined or lamed their fortunes, or gave up a contest with much bitterness of heart to which they found themselves unequal. Thus the ground was forelaid for great rejoicings when Mr. Decastro's foot should slip, and many rejoiced with exceeding great joy accordingly.

Mrs. Decastro, as soon as it came to be known that her husband was run away, did not care how little people looked at her, and though she shut herself up in her house was never at home in it. Sundry reports came abroad concerning Mr. Decastro; some said he had not only made his escape out of London, but out of the world, that he had put a pistol to his head and blown his brains out; others, that he had fought a duel with one of his creditors who had blown his brains out for him and saved him that trouble; others, that he had run away from his wits as well as his creditors, and was clapt up in a dark room and a strait waistcoat. There were other reports, and no wonder, when so many tongues were in motion, but these shall content us at present. In regard to her person, Mrs. Decastro was so far safe from all assaults of the law, which comes down, like other things, with all its vengeance upon the poor husband's head, and never meddles with the wife; and though man and wife are one flesh, yet when the husband's flesh is put into jail, the wife's flesh is left out for some reason, though the fault may be more in her flesh than his.

When Old Crab came into the house, he found matters in it at sixes and sevens; servants grumbling for want of their wages, butchers refusing meat, bakers bread, coal-merchants coals, and all roaring for money like mad; and when it was known that Old Crab was

The History of Mr. John Decastro

come again into his brother's matters, it was expected that he would be pulled in pieces, and he certainly would if he had been a bank-note. But he did not come with "I promise to pay" written upon his person. Old Crab was a man who never made any such rash promises in these cases; he had not been in the house an hour, however, before he had twenty men upon him with bills in their hands. He lifted his oaken towel, drove them before him like dust, and told them there might be five shillings in the pound for the rascals for any thing he knew, but would not give his word for that. The sight of the old paymaster, however, gave the creditors great hopes. The first thing Old Crab did when he came to town was to sell his brother's house in Grosvenor-square, which he did for ready money, to one Lord Delamere, of whom Mr. Decastro bought it.

The house had been pawned to Mr. Decastro for a play-debt in which his wife was concerned, when Lord Delamere getting into troubled waters, Mr. Decastro paid his lordship the difference, at that time much in want of money, and took the house—and this to be revenged upon his lordship upon a quarrel, for he instantly turned him and his family into the street. This was not much to Mr. Decastro's credit, but as all know it, 'tis in vain to say more or less about the matter: things turn about in this world and come strangely home to a man's own door: a rich uncle died and left Lord Delamere a good fortune. Money was now at ebb with Mr. Decastro and at flow with his lordship, who had now an abundance, so he was glad of an opportunity to regain his own family house, and be revenged in his turn upon Mr. Decastro's family.

The History of Mr. John Decastro

Old Crab knew all this, and did not fish the waters in vain for Lord Delamere, who gave him his price at a word, and the means, if need might be, of getting Mrs. Decastro speedily out of London; for it was his intention to take her and the children back with him into the north: so the house was sold over Mrs. Decastro's head, and she none the wiser, and that to the bitterest enemy she had in the world.

When Old Crab came to the door, he gave it three or four hard bangs with his great oaken towel, as usual, and asked for Mrs. Decastro, when the man who answered the knocker said his mistress was not at home.

"You lie, you scoundrel!" quoth Old Crab; "tell her I am come, or I will break your bones."

Upon which the footman, seeing the oaken towel raised over his head, dashed away, and Old Crab walked up stairs after him, and found Mrs. Decastro sitting with the children and in tears. He bade her prepare to go back with him into the north, but she refused to leave the house. Women are apt to be obstinate sometimes, but it is very foolish, and if men are so too, they are none the wiser for that.

"What am I to do in the north?" said she.

"It is no matter," quoth Old Crab, "you will know when you come."

"Her husband might run where he liked," she said, "but none should turn her out of that house, for her money bought it, and her's it was."

This was true, for her fortune was sold out of the funds to pay Lord Delamere the balance, but her money lay under no tie.

"We will talk a little about that when I come out of Berkshire," said he.

The History of Mr. John Decastro

"What are you going to do in Berkshire?" said she.

"I am going to sell the estate there," said he, "to help to pay your debts."

"Is there enough to pay them," said she, "when all is sold?"

"You will be wiser when you know," quoth Old Crab; "but I came to tell you that I shall take you and the children back with me into the north, when I come out of Berkshire; so pack up your tatters and be ready."

While Old Crab was in Berkshire it came to Mrs. Decastro's ears, where bad news would come sometimes, that her house had been sold, and that Lord Delamere had bought it. This intelligence turned Mrs. Decastro into stone: and it would have been well if this petrifaction had held her, for then she would have felt nothing, for a stone, some say, has no feeling: but flesh and blood unluckily came again and brought back those nice feelings which are a sad trouble to some folks. She was now in great terror, and sent letters, and, at last, one by express, after Old Crab into Berkshire; she expected every hour to be turned out goods and chattels and all into the street. Poor lady, she sat upon thorns, and there we must leave her, not having any easier cushion at present to put underneath her. Women find the use of men sometimes, though they can scarcely ever give them a good word; and it is fit they should for being so saucy.

Old Crab and Mrs. Decastro had never been the best of friends; for Mrs. Decastro was a very fine lady and a very extravagant one too, and that was a sort of thing which Old Crab was never much in love with. He

The History of Mr. John Decastro

would cast up her milliners, mantua-makers, perfumers, lacemen, embroiderers, furriers, silkmen, artificial-florists, florists, confectioners, dentists, gold-smiths, silver-smiths, jewellers, and other the like bills, with many grins of indignation, and tell her she would come to ruin and a jail, if she could shower down gold out of her petticoats as often as she had a mind to shake herself. She was allowed but a thousand pounds a year for her pin-money, she said, and if men pinched their wives in that manner they must expect outstanding bills for necessaries which no woman on the face of the earth can do without. Old Crab must be very unreasonable, indeed, not to be satisfied with this answer: he did nothing but growl at her, however, and took leave to say that "many a man kept himself and his wife and a family of ten children upon less money, and owed no more than he could pay at the year's end."

"She had heard of more being done by less," she said, "in old story-books, but miracles had little to do with the present times; it were very like, indeed, that a country parson that lives in a pig-stye, should know what was enough, or what was not enough, for the expenditure of a woman of distinction."

"Miracles have very little to do with the present times, that may be true," quoth Old Crab, "or who knows but you might come to set folks a good example? But the devil has lain so long in your body, that it would be no easy matter to turn him out of his old lodgings, and still less so to keep him, when he was cast out, from running back again to his old quarters."

Thus Old Crab and Mrs. Decastro would spit sulphur at one another for an hour together, and whatever love Old Crab might have for her, she very certainly

The History of Mr. John Decastro

loved the devil a great deal more than she did Old Crab. But now, though she had told him that she hated the sight of him a thousand times, she had taken such a liking to him all on a sudden that she even sent a man and horse express to fetch him out of Berkshire, as soon as a man could come.

Mrs. Decastro had taken it into her head that she had a great many friends in London, but as soon as her husband was said to be a beggar, and she no better, she had a very hard matter to find one. Prosperity makes friends, but adversity tries them.

Mr. and Mrs. Decastro's friends, however, were very much like water, the very first hole that was made in Mr. Decastro's estate out they all ran at it: current friends, though not sterling, that came with money and went with money; they stuck to Mr. Decastro's gold like dirt upon a guinea, that comes with it and goes with it;—and the best friend at last that they had to their backs was Old Crab, a rough piece of stuff, but sound stuff. Old Crab was solid silver, many other of their friends were but plated; after a little use their surface got rubbed off, and they showed their base metal.

Mr. Decastro had a very fine property in Berkshire, and a noble mansion built on one part of it, but Old Crab could not so readily find a purchaser for it as he did for the house in town; he sold a good slice of it, however, to a neighbour, but still had eighty thousand pounds worth left upon his hands; which he disposed of in the following manner: He had a little orphan put under his care, named Genevieve de Roma, a sister's only child, whose parents were dead. Her father, who was a Jew, had amassed much wealth in the In-

The History of Mr. John Decastro

dies, and, dying, left it all in ready money to his daughter, to the amount of a hundred thousand pounds. The prudent Jew, knowing Old Crab, appointed him her guardian and trustee, leaving orders that seventy or eighty thousand pounds should be laid out in land for her use. Old Crab saw this would be a good opportunity; the land was excellent, and the house new (for Mr. Decastro's father had built it), and situate in a county which some have called, and, perhaps, with some truth, the Garden of England.

Lord Delamere, in want of a house in the country, took it on a good lease of Old Crab, and the business in Berkshire was done: he was now, therefore, at leisure to read Mrs. Decastro's letters; when, telling the man, who came express with the last, to get along back again to town, and say he was coming, he mounted the box of a stage-coach and soon made his words good.

On his return to London he found Mrs. Decastro in a sad taking. She had had a fit, but was recovered, for one told her that Lord Delamere's carriage was at the door; which was a lie, and, perhaps, the only one that was ever told in London. It was a wonder it did not make greater disturbance. Mrs. Decastro, however, was so astonished at it that she fell into a fit.

“O sir,” said she, upon Old Crab's entrance, “I am glad you are come! O what a dreadful situation I am in!”

“If you don't like it,” said he, “you may change it for another.”

“What right have you, sir,” said she, taking fire, “to sell my house? Was not the whole of my fortune sold out of the funds to the last shilling to buy it?”

The History of Mr. John Decastro

“What’s the woman brawling at?” quoth Old Crab; “your fortune was not put under your direction and appointment when brother John got a license to tie an ass and a fool together. You’d better hold your tongue till you can talk about what you understand, woman!”

“If the house must be sold,” said she, “what, in the name of heaven, did you sell it to Lord Delamere for?”

“Seventy thousand pounds,” quoth Old Crab.

“I think I shall go distracted,” said she, if raving can be called speaking, “you know what I mean—the man is my enemy—he will turn me into the street.”

“I know it,” quoth Old Crab, “and sold it to him to choose, and for that purpose.”

“For what purpose?” said she.

“To get you turned out,” quoth Old Crab. “But you’ll come out now without being turned out, perhaps, when I call for you, and I shall be ready in a few days to return into the north.”

“What a fool was I,” said she, “to give away myself and my fortune in this manner! I always thought this house and furniture my own, for my money bought it, and that no creditor of my husband could dare to lay a finger upon it!”

“It is not the first time you have thought wrong,” quoth Old Crab, “by a pretty many, madam, let that be your comfort.”

“Comfort!” cried she, ‘what comfort have I left me? am I not at this cursed fellow’s mercy to be insulted and turned out into the highway?’

“I suppose,” quoth Old Crab, with a grin, “you do as you would be done by.”

The History of Mr. John Decastro

This put Mrs. Decastro beyond all patience, and she flung out of the room like one mad.

She had not been gone one moment, however, before she bounced in again, and almost ran her head into Old Crab's teeth, who was coming out. She made two or three attempts to speak, but something choked her, at last she tossed herself upon a sofa, and fell a crying. Old Crab leaned upon his oaken towel and stood and looked at her without speaking one word. A flood of tears gave her a little relief, when she leaped off the sofa, and coming up to Old Crab, who stood his ground, though he did not know what to expect, she said, "I am reduced to the necessity of begging for your protection."

"You would have done yourself more credit, if you had not asked for it," quoth Old Crab, "and me too if you had not thought it necessary. But out of this place you shall come, or I will put a ferret into the house that shall make the rats bolt, and you too, madam, amongst other vermin—but I have something else to do than stand talking to a doll. A word with you: this day week, at two o'clock in the morning, I shall call for you and the children to go back with me into the north: be ready at the time."

"How are we to go?" said she.

"In the stage-coach," said he.

"I never was in such a thing as a stage-coach in my life," said she.

"This will be the first time then," said he.

"But shall I be safe here till you come?" said she.

"Trust to me," quoth Old Crab, and away he went: and those words from Old Crab were as good as another's bond.

The History of Mr. John Decastro

As soon as he was gone she fell to pack up her clothes and her jewels, which are sometimes the first things that run in a woman's head, and the last things that quit possession of her heart. A footman came in soon after Old Crab's departure to ask her if she would choose to be at home to the Countess of Budemere? If Mrs. Decastro had any female friends at all, her sister-in-law was certainly one. The servant had orders to introduce her ladyship.

After Mrs. Decastro had explained her condition and bewailed her woes, she bethought her to ask:

“But, pray, do you know any thing about this old family place in the north—a castle I think they call it?”

“I was born in it,” replied Lady Budemere, “but left it too soon to recollect the least of it. Our ancestors lived in it for many generations: but my father was too gay to live so much out of society; he bought his place in Berkshire, therefore, and built upon it, to get a little amongst folks, and more into the light of the world. This old family place has been neglected now so many years that it can be little better than a heap of ruins. I will tell you all I have heard of it from others: it is built on an island in the middle of a lake, an island containing about three thousand acres of ground, one third of which is covered with wood. The island rises in the middle like a round hill, though not very high, upon which hill stands the old castle, which looks at a distance as if it was stuck in the middle of a thick wood. There is a fine bunch of oaks on one side which hides all but the towers at the corners of it: the wood, which is composed of very stately trees, grows round the edge of the island like a broad riband, and

The History of Mr. John Decastro

forms a verdant zone next the water, which, and the water together, shut the world out as if it was a thief. The castle was built by one of our ancestors who came over with William the Conqueror; his name was Athel-wolf Decastro, who took it into his head to quarrel with the world because it was not good enough for him, so he turned up his nose at it and left it, and ran into this secluded place to get out of the smell of it. The castle is built of stone, and the outer wall of it is four yards thick; it is built upon a square, with a high tower at each corner. The inside of it, I have heard, is, a good deal of it, cabined off into small apartments, but there are some very large rooms in it: the roof is covered with large broad plates of solid stone which are supported with whole trees by way of rafters, laid down with their branches on them, which is said to be a great curiosity. My lord and I have intended, these two or three summers past, to take a trip into the north, and see this, and other oddities there; but one thing or other has always stood in the way. There are no other houses on this island, my brother Bat's farm-house excepted, unless it be a few fishermen's cottages. On the south side of the lake is the ferry, where boats are kept for any that would pass the water, and on the opposite shore stands a great post with a horn chained to it, which is blown to call the ferryman. My brother Bat's farm-house is as old as the castle, and of all the neat farm-houses in the world is said to be the neatest. He rents a thousand acres of my brother John, which is nearly half the island, that is of the unwooded part of it: the rest lies in pastures called the castle lands; they used to be well stocked with deer in my father's days. Bat is vastly fond of this place, and

The History of Mr. John Decastro

would bring John to live in it, and his argument for it is, that a man and his estates cannot be too near together; but this is now quite impossible, for, if the place is not a ruin, it would take a very large sum of money to make it at all fit to receive any human being, and what money can be found must now go another way. If one had a mind to bury oneself alive I don't know a fitter place for it than in this old castle; there is scarcely a house within a day's journey, except Mr. Grove's at Hindermark, and that, by all accounts, looks like a place built by a man that had committed murder, and had run away to hide himself for fear of getting hanged."

"This old castle," said Mrs. Decastro, "must be a dismal place by your account of it; but I think, in the mind I am, I could be glad to run into a tomb to get out of this house, and out of London."

CHAPTER VI

How Mrs. Decastro was frightened in her Bed—Old Crab paid his Brother's Debts—How Mrs. Decastro and the Children get safe out of London in the Dark.

THE two ladies had a great deal more talk together, but perhaps the reader cares little for the chat of ladies:—for, if it were not for the music of their sweet voices, and the pretty looks of their pretty faces, who could have patience to hear their tittle-tattle for five minutes? for who talk more that have less to say? and who say so little in so much talking? But do not the men talk as much nonsense as the women? Yes, as much as the women could for their hearts if they were not the more silent animals of the two. Lady Budemere took her leave with many very kind assurances, and they did Mrs. Decastro's heart good to hear them, certainly, but brought little help.

Now if a house be on fire and there is a lady in it she is apt to get the fidgets; Mrs. Decastro was in a like taking, and quite as restless. She did a thing, however, which, perhaps, she would not have done in it if it had been on fire, and that was, she went to bed in it. How she slept, or what she dreamed about, we never could come to know; but she was terribly disturbed very early the next morning with as much knocking and noise as could come if fifty people were taking the house to pieces. She rang for her maid to know what on earth was come to the place, when she was told

The History of Mr. John Decastro

that there were workmen in almost all the rooms in the house, taking down the furniture, packing it up, and handing it into waggons which stood ready at the door to receive it.

Mrs. Decastro leaped out of bed as if she had been bit by a snake in it, and was not quite so long a-dressing as she had sometimes been when going to a ball. One woman has great spirit where another would be frightened out of her senses. Mrs. Decastro, as soon as she had covered what Nature, who has been pleased to put clothes on every other animal, hair, scale, or feather, had left naked, boldly sallied forth amongst the workmen, and asked by whose order it was that they carried the furniture out of the house? She was answered, "by their master's orders"; and that was all the answer she could get, except from one, who asked her "what part of the house she could have lived in not to know that Lord Delamere had bought the place? And what was become of Decastro and his wife, and what stone they could be made of to run away and leave their children to be turned into the street?" This put the poor lady to flight in a moment, who had no little reason to think that Lord Delamere had sent his people to turn her and her children out of the house; her conscience could not but tell her how much justice there was in it, but she did not much like the thoughts of it for all that. She ran up-stairs, and, locking herself into her room, threw herself upon the bed and wept for ten minutes together.

It presently came into her head, however, that she was not making the best use of her time, so she jumped up and sent a note to Old Crab, begging and beseeching him by all that he held dear, or sacred, to come to

The History of Mr. John Decastro

her that moment; but he was not to be found, so the servant left the note for him at the Old Hummums where he always put up, and returned without any answer. If Mrs. Decastro sat upon five-and-twenty thorns before, she now sat upon fifty, and, what added to her prickings, a party of at least twenty of her acquaintance came into the house with no more ceremony than if there were a public auction in it, to look at the place and enjoy the downfall of poor Mr. Decastro and his family. It had been given out, certainly, that neither she nor her husband were in town, and that the house was sold; so far they had an excuse, and they walked out of one room into another with quite as little ceremony as if it belonged to Mr. Nobody. We must leave the reader to guess at poor Mrs. Decastro's situation when she heard their well-known voices at her bedroom door, and some hand make an attempt to open the same, and in they would have come upon her all together, if she had not bolted all the bolts which she could find. A storm cannot last for ever—and a calm usually comes after it—the house now became quiet, but not until every apartment except three had been totally disfurnished! These three were the nursery, Mrs. Decastro's bed-room, and the kitchen: and Mrs. Decastro, upon asking her maid what was become of all the servants, was told that Old Crab had paid them all off except one nursery-woman, herself, and the cook. The coach-houses, stables, cellars, all were cleared, the windows all shut, and the house looked like one uninhabited. Mrs. Decastro and the children, however, had all their wants supplied, except some artificial ones, which were left to be any body's masters.

The History of Mr. John Decastro

As soon as Old Crab got back to London out of Berkshire, he called a meeting of his brother's creditors, who, being seated, a hundred of them at least, on each side of a long table with nothing else but a green cloth upon it, Old Crab asked them if they had a mind to eat him? for they gave him such an hungry look as if they came to pick his bones. Now out came all their bills as the word of command, and Old Crab was almost smothered in paper! In meetings of this sort there is for the most part one or two more impudent than all the rest, who take upon themselves to be the mouth of the company: now one of this kidney was present here, and quite as impudent as any that ever opened his mouth upon such an occasion. He arose, as if he thought folks could not see too much of his person, and asked Old Crab what they were to expect in the pound?

"There might be five shillings," said he, "for what he knew, and they might think themselves well paid if they got as much as that. He would see, however, what could be done for them."

So taking their bills, one by one, Old Crab put them orderly upon a file, and, telling them that they should have notice when he was ready for them, dissolved the meeting, which was held at the chambers of Petticraft the attorney. Now there was one Sir John O. amongst Mr. Decastro's creditors, of whom money had been borrowed, who, having no mind, perhaps, to soil his person amongst a crew of dirty tradesmen, came into the room after the rest were gone out of it.

"So, sir," said he to Old Crab, "you are come into your brother's affairs again, I find, and, from all I can learn, it is a pity that you ever left them. Your

The History of Mr. John Decastro

brother is a bankrupt, I am told; how are his matters to be arranged, and what are we to look for in the pound?"

"I must know myself before I can tell you," quoth Old Crab.

"When is that like to be?" said Sir John.

"You may know some day, if you don't get hanged first," quoth Old Crab. "If you had come into the room sooner you might have heard what I said to the rest of the gang, if you had brought your ears along with you."

"I never had the honour to meet you before," said Sir John, "but I have heard you were a rough one; perhaps you will give yourself the trouble just to say when we are like to have a dividend?"

"Others have asked the same question and are as like to wait for an answer," quoth Old Crab; "pray who the devil are you, you speak as if you would be thought to be somebody?"

"I am Sir John O. and one of the creditors."

"Sir John fool's head!" quoth Old Crab; "why the plague didn't you come into the room among the rest?"

"Sir John fool's-head!" said the baronet, "pray, sir, what do you mean by that?"

"Mean!" roared Old Crab, "why I mean to speak English—did your mother never tell you there was such a language? Why didn't you come into the room with the rest of the gang, I say; must I call one meeting for them, and another for you, ye great block-head?"

"Blockhead!" said Sir John, "I don't at all understand such words!"

"Then," said Old Crab, "you may go and look them out in the dictionary!"

Upon which he took up his file of bills and walked out of the room with his hat on.

Folks will be civil to a great man though they hate him worse than the devil; now Old Crab did not hate Sir John O., though the devil himself might have looked for a little more politeness. No civil distinction, how illustrious soever, weighed one feather with him, who, to give him his due, had much rather find a virtue in a great person than a fault; for great men, Old Crab used to say, catch the common eye, and people were more apt to imitate what they see in them than in others. If a man be a great man, people think that every thing he does must needs be great too, and will do as he does to be thought so. Another of his sayings was, To take a rascal to be an honest man till you found him out to be a rascal was civil, but to take an honest man to be a rascal until you find him out to be an honest man was safe. He played his part in the world with so much caution and prudence, that some were a little given to think he kept himself upon the safe side of the question. But Old Crab was always more angry with a great man who did amiss than he was with a little one. Examples, he would say, that came down from on high, came down with greater weight and force upon those below, and did mischief in proportion to the elevation from which they fell.

But to return: Old Crab, on his way from Petticraft the attorney's chambers to Grosvenor-square, passed his brother-in-law Lord Budemere's house: his lordship, standing at his door, and observing Old Crab to cross the way to get by and escape him, whose conduct

of late he had by no means approved of, called to him, and very civilly asked him how he did, and invited him into his house.

“What should I come into your house for?” said Old Crab; “I am not best pleased with you nor your house either, and don’t care how little I see of you or your house, not I.”

“I am very sorry for it,” said the earl, “and could be glad to see you oftener; and however I and my house may be out of favour with you, we shall be at all times very happy to see any of our relations in it.”

“Aye,” quoth Old Crab, “you can tell them so to their faces and wish them at the devil at the same time. What should I do in your house but make you tell more lies than you have told already?”

“Come,” said the earl with a good-humoured smile, “you always say worse than you think; I had rather a man should tell me that I lied to my face, than tell me a lie to my face, and tell me by what he did that I lied in what I said: but I really am glad to see you, brother Bartholomew, though I own I have told many a man that I was glad to see him when I was not; but we who live in the world must do these things.—I am indeed glad to see you, for I much wish to ask you about our good brother John’s matters, and, if you are not very much in haste, you will oblige me by coming in a little, you will I assure you. What immense bundle is this which you have in your hand?”

“Why, ’tis the scoundrel’s bills,” quoth Old Crab; “I am come from a meeting of his creditors.”

“Well, but we cannot talk in the street of these things,” said the earl, taking Old Crab in a friendly way by the arm, and leading him into the house.

The History of Mr. John Decastro

"If we can't, there are enough that can, and in a pretty many streets too; I don't know what the plague should make you so devilish mealy-mouthed," quoth Old Crab, "not I."

Upon which his lordship introduced him into a magnificent room, full of a world of fine folks, of whom Old Crab took not the smallest notice. As soon as he was seated in the midst of all this gay company, and there were at least twenty people in the room, Lady Budemere came to him, whom Old Crab either did not see, or, perhaps, did not look for.

"Well, brother," said she, "I suppose I must come and speak to you if I expect to be spoken to, or be overlooked."

"If you were less look'd at and more look'd after, it might be as well," quoth Old Crab; "what have you got to say?"

"Why this," said she, "I hope you find my brother John's matters in a better way than you expected; I own I think they are more frightened than hurt."

"It is no great matter what you think," quoth Old Crab; "it were odds but you think that you think right I warrant; if you did not, there were enough to put you in the head of it, that's one good thing comes of your rank in life; and if you are in the wrong you are not like to find a friend to tell you as much. How I shall get this lame dog over the stile I shall not say, but if he be seen no more in this place, there will be no want of profligate scoundrels to keep vice in countenance with grandeur and opulence."

"You think opulence and profligacy convertible terms?" said Sir Harry St. Clair, who was one of the party.

The History of Mr. John Decastro

"I should be loth to tell you my thoughts," quoth Old Crab, "if I cared a rush for offending you; hark ye, young man, the next time you come out to ask questions some might take you for Solomon if you brought a fool's head along with you."

"You had better not talk to him, Harry," said Sir John O., who happened to be there; "you will get nothing but abuse. It is not long since he gave me a cast of his office, and if he had not been a parson I would have kicked him out of the room."

"Your first kick would have been your last," quoth Old Crab, "for I would have broken one half of the bones in your body to have taught the other half good manners: you are one amongst my brother's creditors, if I have not forgot the braying of an ass?"

"I am, parson," said Sir John, "though no more an ass than yourself."

"It is good luck to be a fool," quoth Old Crab, "for none are so well pleased with themselves: did you owe my brother a grudge that you lent him your money? It is the world's charity for one to lend another a helping hand to the devil!"

"Well, parson," said Sir John, "canst tell what my four thousand pounds are worth? Petticraft says there will be but five shillings in the pound."

"What!" exclaimed Lord Budemere, "are matters so bad as that?"

"Poor Mrs. Decastro," cried Lady Budemere, "it makes my heart ache indeed to hear this! But tell us, my good brother, has Petticraft any good grounds for saying so?"

"How should I know any thing about Petticraft and his grounds?" quoth Old Crab; "he may know more

The History of Mr. John Decastro

than I know, and if you want to know what he knows you may go and ask him."

"Why," said Sir John O. "Petticraft told me that you told the creditors so yourself."

"I spoke in the subjunctive mood, you blockhead; and if you don't know what that is you may go back to school, if you ever were at one, and look into your grammar."

"Really," said Sir John, "this language is intolerable," rising from his chair and coming up to Old Crab in a threatening manner:—"I shall not make any disturbance here—you will have the goodness to follow me into another room—I have a little business with you."

The baronet was in such a rage he could scarce get breath to speak. Old Crab and he walked out of the room together and Lord Budemere went with them. Old Crab, thinking that the baronet had something to say upon his brother's matters, for so he construed the word business, was not at all prepared for what followed, for the moment they came into another room Sir John called Old Crab an impudent rascal, and struck him a violent blow on the head. It was a little lucky for the baronet that Old Crab had left his oaken towel with his hat and his bundle of papers in the other room, though good fortune was not all on his side, for a doctor had come to visit a patient in the house and left his hat and cane upon a chair at hand, seeing which Old Crab seized Sir John O. by his collar, and gave him the doctor's cane as long as it held out, and to the baronet's cost it was a pretty tough one and somewhat larger than a man's two thumbs put together. Sir John was miserably beaten, for he could

The History of Mr. John Decastro

no more contend with a man of Old Crab's vast strength and stature than he could with old Hercules, and was not a little glad to see the cane fly in pieces and get rid of the iron ferrule which armed its point like a thimble, and gave him a great deal of trouble. As soon as Old Crab found nothing to be left of the cane in his hand but the golden head and the silk riband, he let his victim go, and asked him if he had a mind to give him another knock on the pate? The baronet made the best of his way out of the room without saying a word, with his clothes very much torn about his neck and shoulders.

"Now, kinsman," said Old Crab to Lord Budemere, who stood by to see the fun, "who was it that struck the first blow?"

"Why," said he, "Sir John O. was certainly the aggressor, and broke the peace."

"And my pate at the same time," quoth Old Crab, wiping the blood off his face, that trickled down his cheek very fast from under his wig.

The doctor, who had done with his patient, one of the servants who was ill of the gout, came into the room for his hat and cane, and seeing Old Crab very bloody, asked him what was the matter?—Being told, he put him upon a chair, and, taking off his wig, found a very deep cut in the side of his head which went to the skull and laid the bone bare an inch.

"Why," said the doctor, applying some lint and styptic to the wound, "this cut could never come from a man's knuckles": upon which Old Crab looking at his wig, which he held in his hand, found it to be cut through as if cut by a knife.

As soon as the doctor had staunched the blood and

dressed the wound, which, coming from an hospital, he was prepared to do, on making his bow to Old Crab upon receiving his fee, he kicked something with the foot whose office it was to make the scrape upon the floor: looking, he picked up a large snuff-box, upon the sharp edge of which blood was found and some of the hair of Old Crab's wig sticking to it; this explained matters, and more clearly when Lord Budemere showed the baronet's crest and cypher on the lid of it. The box was a square one with sharp corners, and the doctor observed that such an instrument might have given a man his death-blow. Old Crab, however, put on his wig again, and felt little more of it. When he and Lord Budemere returned to the company, and the earl told the story, the room rang with laughter, and Sir John, because he was well thrashed, was, of course, called a great fool; which is quite the way of the world if a man be the general of an army; for to be beaten is a mark of folly, and it certainly makes a man look like a fool.

Now we by no means take it upon ourselves to defend Old Crab in this matter, for though he was afraid of nobody, it by no means follows that he therefore might abuse every body. He would have his saying for all that; and though there are a great many things in Old Crab which it would be well if every man would imitate, we would advise this to be set down amongst his faults, and moreover as a matter that would be attended with no little danger in the imitation, even though a man, a thing that very rarely happens, were as large and as powerful as Old Crab.

No jest is immortal—this, which was a very good one at the baronet's expense, died away and all the

The History of Mr. John Decastro

laughter along with it. His basting confined him to his bed for a week: but of this thus far. Now a great many questions were asked, but none were answered, upon Mr. Decastro's matters, and Old Crab left Lord Budemere's house just as full of wisdom as he found it. Old Crab was a very close man; he had a very good rule for keeping a secret, and that was, never to tell it to any body.

Mr. Decastro's debts amounted to the vast sum of one hundred and ninety thousand pounds. His property, however, in London and in Berkshire, when the whole of it was sold, aided by the last year's rents, put money enough into Old Crab's hands to pay every farthing which his brother owed in the world. Willing to keep the matter as much a secret as possible, for some reasons best known to himself, he called no more public meetings of creditors, but coming to each man's house, told him in his ear, that if he would keep the thing a profound secret, he would pay him the amount of his bill; but must take it for an especial favour. He served every man the same, and set them all a laughing at one another in their sleeves, each thinking himself to be the lucky man. Sir John O., however, would not see Old Crab, though he came with four thousand pounds in his pocket for him, which he was fain to leave in Petticraft's hands upon the execution of a legal receipt.

To return to Mrs. Decastro,—she got another terrible fright before she got out of London. Now, what teeth and claws are to a lion, horns to a bull, poison to an adder, fear is to a woman, the means of self-preservation: and what matter how the thing be done, if it is done, and well done? Great teeth and claws will

The History of Mr. John Decastro

tear their way through, but fear saves all the trouble of biting and scratching by keeping out of harm's way. Now Mrs. Decastro had teeth and nails, it is true, but a great deal of fear into the bargain, and ought to be, upon both accounts, very safe, if one had not unluckily stood in the way of the other: for what are teeth and claws if fear comes in and prevents a lady from using them like a lion?

Now, some are never content with a book unless it has *reflections* in it; and others think they only stand in the reader's way and hinder the story: hence it follows that a writer must needs be able to do two things at once, to please two readers; this comes of people having different tastes. This is all very fine and very sublime, but it has nothing at all to do with Mrs. Decastro. We will come to what has, then,—she had been forced to breakfast, dine, sup, and sleep all in the same room for several days, at which she felt extreme disgust, not because ladies cannot, or do not do this, but then it must be when they take it in their heads to be ill and keep their rooms. Now Mrs. Decastro was very well, and, what is more, chose to be so, and, as for keeping of rooms, that she could not do, and for this reason, because they were all sold; and her greatest grievance was upon this account—she was in the house of another, who certainly would have turned her out if he had known she had been there.

Lord Delamere knew, indeed, that the children were in the house, but, to give him his due, he was too much of a nobleman to wreak his vengeance upon such as had never offended him. On the day before Mrs. Decastro's departure his lordship's carriage stopped at the door, to the no small consternation of that good lady,

The History of Mr. John Decastro

for she heard the carriage come, and, soon after, his lordship's voice in the house; which, from being disfurnished, echoed the more, and made every noise more terrible; for empty hollow rooms are apt to sound, and nothing quicker than a lady's ear when she has a mind to be frightened. Mrs. Decastro could have been glad at that moment to have been put into a sack and trundled out of London in a wheel-barrow.

Some blamed Old Crab for being so severe; he said the severest diseases called for the severest medicines: and, at another time, upon the same objection, he said, folks had as good reason to call a surgeon severe in cases of amputation and lancing of inveterate ulcers. It was no such easy matter to cut out vices without giving some pain to the patient, and, in moral matters, the more the better, for it was often that the pain did all the business. What would be the good of a sound whipping if there were no pain in it? of a cuff, or a kick, if nobody felt it? In regard to profligacy, said Old Crab, what can be done in obstinate cases, where calm advice is not only disregarded, but laughed at, thrown away, as some throw medicine away, and will not take it? Money makes folks saucy, profligate, and hard-hearted: his brother and sister had both used Lord Delamere very ill, and it would have served them right to have brought him into the house to have put them both out by the shoulders.

It must be added, however, in justice to them, that they were very sorry for this thing afterwards. Old Crab, however, whose maxim it was that whosoever did amiss ought to be punished for it, was determined to make Mrs. Decastro smart for this inhuman usage of Lord Delamere, who, to give her her due, was the

most inveterate of the two against him, and to give her her due too, was the most sorry for it afterwards. And smart she did, if fear can be said to make one smart, when she heard Lord Delamere's voice at her room-door, for he actually came to it, and would have opened it, and come in, if it had not been locked and bolted: and one of the workmen, whom his lordship had brought with him, and to whom he had been giving his orders, was heard to say, "The door is fastened, my lord, shall I force it open?" At that instant Mrs. Decastro fell on the floor in a fit, and it was well she did it without making any other noise than a great bounce on the boards.

"Let matters be," said Lord Delamere, checking the man, who had a spike-bit in his hand, and would have forced the door, "the children are in that room, I owe them no ill-will, they will be gone to-morrow: but you heard how mine were used?"

"Yes, my lord," said the man, "and every body else, and it would serve Decastro's brats but right to unkennel the whole brood of them, and put them into the street."

His lordship answered, with feelings that did him honour, "I can't find it in my heart to treat the poor children ill."

Saying which, his lordship turned from the door and went into some other rooms. Mrs. Decastro soon got the better of her fit, by which she got no hurt but a broken elbow, and cast a ghastly look all round the room for Lord Delamere, and was glad enough not to find what she looked for. One of her little boys, who had run to the door to listen, told her what Lord Delamere had said, and, strange as it may seem that a kind

The History of Mr. John Decastro

thing should have so keen an edge, this act of mercy cut her through the heart. It by no means eased her of her fears, however, for she came not within the meaning of this act, and her danger still remained as great as ever, if her being in the house should come to his lordship's knowledge.

People that hold themselves high in the world have but the further to fall when they come down, and it is odds but they do come down some day. Mr. and Mrs. Decastro had held themselves very high, and that was very foolish; for the fear of being seen, now every body knew how much they were humbled, gave Mrs. Decastro more pain than a sound whipping. Old Crab felt no mercy for proud folks; he never said one word to her about the debts being all paid, which had been glorious news, but left her and her pride to fight their own battles, and she found to her cost what a serpent she had cherished in her bosom. But if we begin to preach, our readers will serve us right if they fall asleep.

As long as Lord Delamere was heard in the house talking to the workmen, Mrs. Decastro had the fidgets: if she sat down, she would jump up again just as if she had set down upon a great pin: if she walked about her room, she catched her feet up as if the floor burned her toes; every little noise appalled her, and she would start at times as if she saw a ghost! She spent this last day in an agony which nobody can describe, so we hope to get excused in not attempting it, notwithstanding every writer is expected to do impossible things; such, for instance, as write books without any faults in them, and get abused too for not doing so.

At last this day came to a close, which will be the

The History of Mr. John Decastro

case, when the sun goes down, with most days, and night came and brought some repose to Mrs. Decastro; for the spectre that had haunted the house great part of the said day, walked out of it, and Old Crab, known by his heavy boots and oaken towel, came thundering up the stairs to tell Mrs. Decastro that the stage-coach would be at the door at two o'clock in the morning; and it was as good as his word, for it came at the time, and Mrs. Decastro jumped into it with as much joy as if she could have jumped into Paradise.

Now the talk of the town was as follows: viz. Mr. and Mrs. Decastro were said to be gone into Italy by some, and to Paris by others, who seemed to have good grounds for what they said, because they had seen some who had actually seen them in both places at once, which was not the first time people had been seen in one place when they were two or three hundred miles off in another. Old Crab cut off one source of intelligence on purpose, perhaps, for he paid off every servant (except his ward's nurse, for little Genevieve resided at present with Mr. Decastro's children, who could not speak English), and that some days before he took Mrs. Decastro into the north. The creditors could get no more than five shillings in the pound, it was said, and for this reason, viz., because there was no more for them, and, though there might be a better, folks seemed content with this. Sir John O., however, was said to be the only exception, who had threatened to bring an action against Old Crab for his basting, and had, therefore, been paid all his money to stop his mouth, and the law that was coming out at it. But we have not told the reader how many children Mr. Decastro had, which were a sad neglect,—he had two

The History of Mr. John Decastro

boys, the eldest was called Frederick, and the youngest, an odd little boy, was called Acerbus. Little Genevieve was Mrs. Decastro's niece, as already explained. Well, now we must leave Old Crab, Mrs. Decastro, the children, and all the furniture of Mr. Decastro's house in town, for none of that was sold, travelling along the great north road, and run on before all to Oaken Grove, and see how matters stand there.

CHAPTER VII

How Mr. Decastro employed himself while Old Crab was in the South—How he ran his Head against a Post—The arrival of Old Crab, Mrs. Decastro and the Children—How Mr. Decastro bent his Rib, that is to say his Wife, to his liking—Mrs. Decastro grows very wise by being made a great fool.

WE hope thou art in good wind, reader, for this is like to be a long chapter.—Mr. Decastro's affairs gave Old Crab a world of colic and trouble: he had been at the pains to cast up every bill and examine every article in every one of them, and had struck off no less than a thousand pounds which came of blunders and false reckonings, &c. There were some creditors of a peculiar colour, who brought in what folks call debts of honour; of these Old Crab would not pay one farthing; there was a great deal more paid, however, than had been at all expected, and most people were not only contented, but overjoyed, to see so much money come in where so little had been looked for.

This business kept Old Crab two months in the south; a handsome present was offered, but Old Crab would not take one farthing for his trouble. A handsome present! why, where could handsome presents come from? Have a little patience, reader, and you shall see: But why should he refuse it? did he think it too little? or did he think none large enough? or did he think it beneath his dignity to accept any? or did he think none of his services could deserve any? or did he

The History of Mr. John Decastro

think a present quitted an obligation? Thou art vastly inquisitive, reader; but it is no mean art in a writer to keep his reader upon the look out, and his curiosity awake. But, as we were saying, his brother's matters gave Old Crab a great deal of trouble, and a great knock on the head, upon which last thing a great many wise and shrewd observations might be made, but, some how or other, we are not much in the humour to talk upon this subject at present, so we shall put off knocks on the head until we get to our chapter upon the coming together of solid bodies, wherein all sorts of knocks will be taken into due consideration:—one great bounce excepted, which belongs more especially to this, and we shall now proceed to give an account of it. Mr. Decastro, in his brother's absence, gave himself much to deep meditation; many matters engaged his thoughts, he walked a great deal by himself, and talked to himself, and shed a world of tears over his past follies, and his present misfortunes. He had got into such an odd humour for crying, that even a taste, or a smell, a touch, a sound, or a sight, would bring the water down his face as if it were a church spout: his water came from him in such an abundance that he was more like a pump than a man, he had got into such a way of weeping and shedding of tears. Mrs. B. Decastro did all she could to comfort him, and little Julia would bring her chair close to his, and sit and mend her stockings, and sing to him, but all in vain. The poor gentleman was like to go distracted. Sometimes he would smite his forehead, and, fixing his eyes on the ceiling, say, he was a beggar, a ruined man both in this world and the next; not worth twopence, and that he should come to some untimely end. At other

The History of Mr. John Decastro

times he would fall to cursing of London and Berkshire, and all living creatures in them, down to the smallest creeping thing that creeps upon the earth. London he would call a nursery for hell, whence men, women and children are transplanted into it like brocoli and cauliflowers in a garden; that do what he would there he must come at last as sure as a log of wood to a fire.

Mrs. B. Decastro counselled him very wisely to bear his troubles like a man, and bade him to look for her husband and good news to come together; that fits and starts, raving and tearing, would do more harm than good, an unexpected card might come to be a trump and mend his hand; that if the worst came, her husband, who had put a penny by, could take care of him and one of the children, and Mrs. Decastro and the other might go to her friends who were well in the world, until better stars came up; that it were unwise to take the worst for granted until the worst were proved to be the case. These, and other the like pieces of advice, Mrs. B. Decastro would put into his ear; and the sweetness of her voice, and the tenderness of her manner, not a little aided by her beauty, would lull the poor gentleman, and put all his scorpions to sleep in his bosom. They slept, indeed, at times, but it was to gain more strength, invigorate their stings, and replenish their poisons. He would jump out of his chair sometimes, after a little repose, and fling out of the house without his hat, and little Julia would often run after him with it into the fields.

“My dear uncle,” she would often say, “how happy we should be if you were happy! My papa will not let those terrible men whom you so much fear come to

The History of Mr. John Decastro

fetch you—he will not tell them where you are, sir; then how can they know, when you are so far off, where to find you? they cannot put you into prison if they cannot find you, sir, and who can tell them where to find you so many miles off?"

"Your papa is a very just person," Mr. Decastro would say, "and would not hide a man from the law who owes any thing to the law—he will give me up, my pretty little niece; he will tell my creditors where to find me."

"O but he will pay them," she would answer, "and satisfy them, and then they will not come to take you, sir."

Then Mr. Decastro would fall to weeping, and poor Julia would cry for company. Poor man! his worldly troubles were great, but, as if there were any need, he had other troubles now, and these came from his late acquaintance with religious matters; he could not choose but cast an eye back, now and then, upon a life misspent in atheism, vice, and the service of wicked passions; and, though he had run away from all other creditors, conscience knocked at his door with a long bill. As to his estate in this world, he conceived it to be utterly ruined and lost; and he began seriously to look to what might be saved in another.

"This religion," said he, "of which my brother has given me such an account, would, if I had known any thing about it a little sooner, have answered a **DOUBLE** purpose; for, if I had lived by its rules, all would have been well with me every where in this world, as well as in the next; for no one thing on earth takes better care of a man's money than Religion, for it bolts the door against every sort of vice, profligacy, and extrav-

The History of Mr. John Decastro

gance, the very thieves which have robbed me of my all! Its rules are so excellent, that I am sure it has nothing in it, or about it, but what is true; it proves itself by itself; a man needs but to examine it to believe it to be divine. I have no comfort left but what comes from it, thanks to brother Bat for instructing me in it: I had gone mad, or out of the world by my own hands, but for its kind and timely help. Great as my troubles are, and great as my fall from what I was to what I am, yet the promises and consolations held out to me by this my new acquaintance, bring me a strange and an unexpected comfort. But it will take me a great while to reconcile myself to the estate of a poor man who have been a rich one. I shall feel want in twenty places where a man, who has been born and bred a poor man, does not feel any want at all: this must be expected: what can be done? I am at present but a young man, and may look for many years to come in this world: where can I go, how hide myself, where live unknown?"

Raising his eyes at that moment, and looking round, his extensive property on all sides met his view; the thought at that moment that it might not be his, made the poor gentleman weep sadly. How the loss of a thing endears it to one!—one should be without a thing to know its value: when a thing is one's own it is too near to be seen as it ought to be: another must take it a little in his hands to show one all its beauties and its worth.

"My dear paternal lands, and woods, and waters," quoth Mr. Decastro, raising his wet eyes as if to take his last farewell of all his inheritances, "and thou, venerable castle, in which I first drew breath, adieu! I find

The History of Mr. John Decastro

too late how dear all are to me, and feel a pang which old friends feel at parting!"

Sobs would then interrupt his speech, and he would throw himself upon the ground in a sad agony, and say, that he could not so much as call his body's length of it his own!

While he was rolling upon the ground, and he certainly might have been better employed, little Julia stood at a distance with a letter in her hand, but was too much frightened to come near, for she thought her uncle was in a fit, when giving a sort of plunge in the agonies of his mind, he rolled round with his face towards her, and leaped up as if ashamed to be seen by her in such a taking.

"My dear uncle," said she, "what is the matter? have you had a fit?"

Mr. Decastro looked a little silly, and fell to brushing the dirt off his clothes as if to be employed.

"I have a letter, sir," said Julia, "come for you from papa, I hope it brings you good news."

He took it and walked away with it, without so much as speaking one word. Julia, who had a great curiosity to know the contents, for the little girl was much grieved for her poor uncle, crept after him at a distance to watch him, while he opened and read the letter, which came from Old Crab. He walked on in an hurried step until he came to a thick holly-bush, when he broke open the letter with as much agitation as a thief breaks open a house to steal its contents, and read as follows in a voice loud enough for little Julia to hear him; who crept after him as aforesaid, bringing his hat and stick; which she picked up where he took it into his head to roll about on the ground:

The History of Mr. John Decastro

BROTHER JOHN: I have paid all your debts, and set you clear of all the world: but it hath cost you all you were worth in the south to do it: all the property in the north is still your own. A plank hath been saved out of the wreck, it is the furniture of your house in London—it is on the road to the north—I shall set out with your wife and family in three days' time.

Yours,

BARTHOLOMEW DECASTRO.

Little Julia, hearing this good news, ran away to tell it to her mother, notwithstanding she heard a great noise in the bush where her uncle stood; she thought, however, that he had too much good news to come to any harm, so she ran to tell it to her mother. Little Julia was but a morning star at that time, just risen in the east of life—now, reader, that pretty thing is put in to please the ladies; don't you look cross at it, or at any other the like strokes; for if they are pleased, you will look like a fool to stick out.—Suppose a man die, and we call him a setting sun, what's that to you? one in the occident of life—and the ladies all smile and cry “what a pretty thought!” what a plague need you curl up your lip? If one be best pleased to find a diamond, and another be best pleased to find a barleycorn, what good comes of grumbling if you claw up the stone instead of the grain? it is but to take another scratch, as the fable has it, and you may find what you want, like the old cock upon the dunghill. Read what book you will, my good friend, depend upon it you will find something that you don't like; if you are a gay man, the first grave sentence will set you a swearing; if serious, and two lovers fall to kissing, it will make you jump as if you saw the devil! But to return to little Julia and her mother.

The History of Mr. John Decastro

“Why, Julia,” said she, “where in the world did you pick up your uncle’s hat and stick? good heavens! not by the water-side I hope? I have some time thought him scarce fit to be trusted alone by the water-side.—I hope he has not drowned himself? Though it were no wonder if one so distracted as he should run to the first door to get out of such a world of troubles!”

“No, mamma,” said Julia, “my uncle is in that great holly-bush, on the hill yonder, there,—just where you see that bird flying.—He has got such good news in his letter!—my papa has paid all his debts—and the castle, and the island, and every thing here is all my uncle’s! He is a rich man again, and I am so glad—I dare say he will let papa have his farm for nothing.” Thus the little thing ran on, laughing and crying by turns, and squeezing her uncle’s hat between her knees till it was like any thing but a hat.

“Why, Julia,” said her mother, “where did you get this letter? I saw but one letter and that was for me.”

“I met Old Comical with it, mamma, and he told me to run with it to my uncle.”

“Well, well,” said she, “I have a letter from your papa as well as he, and know all, and am as much pleased with this good news as you can be or any body—but go and take your uncle his hat, and then come to me; I must send you with a message to the castle.”

When Julia returned to Mr. Decastro she found him sitting on the ground and his face very much scratched and bloody. Poor man, his troubles had brought him into so weak a state that the unexpected good news overcame him, and he had fainted and fell amongst some of his old acquaintance, the thorns and the briars, and scratched his face. He kissed his pretty little

The History of Mr. John Decastro

post-woman for her letter, and she ran back to her mother, to take her errand to the castle.

Now this magnificent old place had been taken care of by Old Crab, who was very much attached to it, and had a desire to bring the owner into it to live amongst his estates and tenants in the north: and this his care had cost but little, for the walls were so thick, and the roof so strong and massy, that the house did not want much repairing. It was more like a rock than an edifice, and looked as if it were cut out of a solid block of stone like a statue. All the old furniture had been left in it; for the late Mr. Decastro, being a rich man, had a mind to have every thing new in the south: so he left a place of sterling grandeur and magnificence, and took up with a piece of modern tinsel in the gay county of Berkshire, that cost him a great deal of money to build which might have been brought to better account. If greatness was his object he certainly missed the matter, for a great man had looked much greater amidst lofty towers, fine painted ceilings, painted windows, and rich old tapestries, than stuck in the middle of a tawdry box near London, with every thing new about him as if he had been the first gentleman in his family. This might have done very well for a grocer who had put by his plumb, and had a mind to show folks what sort of thing a gentleman should be;—but, for a man descended from a long line of illustrious ancestors—but enough of this.

The old castle was now to be made ready for the reception of Mr. Decastro and his family, and it needed little to be done, for Old Crab had always kept two or three old women in it to sweep and kill spiders, open windows and make fires; he was fond of the place

The History of Mr. John Decastro

where he was born, and it was not like to come to damage under his care: so little Julia's errand was to run and tell the old women to sweep, air, and light fires in all the rooms that were like to be wanted, and the same day Mr. Decastro's furniture arrived from the south. Old Crab's letter to his wife was as follows:

DEAR WIFE: I look to be at home on Friday. I have settled John's affairs and paid his debts, and it took an amazing sum of money to do it. All the property in the south, some furniture excepted, has been sold to the last penny, which, with the rents in hand, made up a purse big enough to pay all that could be legally demanded. I paid one hundred and ninety thousand pounds away before I could shut my hand: a prodigal dog! I am glad to hear from you that he is penitent. I have kept him in the dark in regard to matters on purpose; and if he had been chained and bolted down in the dark with a straight waistcoat strapped upon his body, a man less mad than he might have been turned out of Bedlam in his place, and done less mischief in the world. I expect the goods will be come on the day you will receive this letter. John, if he have not drowned or hanged himself by that time, may see the things put in their places, and do you give him money to pay the waggoners—but not one farthing until the goods be looked to that there may be no damage. N. B. The waggoners are answerable for all by contract, signed and attested. The two old services of plate are packed in four chests, marked 1, 2, 3, 4. I would have them put into my study for the present. I shall bring my ward Genevieve to our house, till matters are settled at the castle; get the little blue room ready for her and her woman. I am pleased with your account of John Mathers; I believe I have made him an honest and a steady fellow. Tell him if he goes on well I will make him my clerk when old Grimes dies, which thing will be twenty pounds a year.

The History of Mr. John Decastro

He was a mad-brained scoundrel at Gottingen, but I begin to have some hopes of him. I have met with great insolence in London while engaged in John's matters. I thrashed one Sir John O., who gave me a bang on the head: and flung an impudent scoundrel of a perfumer through his own shop-window into the street, and half a score great staring wooden dolls that stood in it along with the rascal. N. B. Say nothing to John about the old leases that will fall at Michaelmas. Remember me to my little wench.

Dear wife,

Yours affectionately,

B. DECASTRO.

The heart that feels pain at another's troubles is made amends by the pleasure it feels at another's joys. Mrs. B. Decastro had one as kind and as tender as any woman in the world. The tears fell fast into her bosom and her lap while she read her husband's letter, and how water comes to have so much to do with both joy and grief is a curious question; but we must leave it at present to say what a hurry this kind-hearted lady was in to find Mr. Decastro, and communicate the good news, when she met little Julia on her way, who had already done the business by giving him the letter aforesaid.

As soon as Mr. Decastro had recovered himself a little from the great knock which his good news had given him;—for it may be remembered that he was beaten down into a holly-bush by the force of it, and had scratched his face; poor man! he had very little strength to spare when the weight of a letter could bring him to the ground;—as soon as Mr. Decastro had recovered himself, he did a thing which he had never done before, returned thanks for his good news,

The History of Mr. John Decastro

and, strange to tell, actually fell on his knees to do it! and this little Julia saw him do, who came running back with his hat, which she had run away with in the wildness of her joy to tell her mother the very good news, that her mother knew very well already.

“My uncle is a better man than papa thinks him to be,” said Julia, “for I saw him kneel down and say his prayers, mamma, after he received my papa’s letter.”

“He could not say his prayers at a better time,” said Mrs. B. Decastro; “it is fit that they who have most and pray least, should come to want something to pray for; and when great things come where but little was expected and less deserved, if it is not enough to teach folks to be thankful, I don’t know what is: I am glad to hear this; it is a sign that your uncle is coming to his senses, for I am sure he has lived like one out of his wits ever since a madman was his own master: but run to the castle, Julia, and bid the old women air beds and light fires,—tell them that your aunt will come from London on Friday.”

Mr. Decastro now came out of his holly-bush, and, being on an eminence, cast his eyes round on his estates with as much pleasure as if any body had just made him a present of them. How all this could be he could not tell, and began to pinch his arms and legs to see if he were not in a dream. It now occurred to him, that he and his good lady must have run into some little error in their calculations, and few men, perhaps, were ever better pleased at making a blunder; for if no blunder had been made, all he were worth in the north would have flown like chaff before the breath of his creditors. He read Old Crab’s letter over twenty times and found it to be just the same the twentieth

The History of Mr. John Decastro

time as when he read it at first: he then put the letter into his pocket and cut three capers for joy. As soon as his capers were over, he walked down to the margin of the lake and fell, not into the water, but into a deep meditation: but not knowing ourselves what he was thinking about, perhaps we shall get excused if we do not tell our readers. On he walked in rather a quick step, muttering to himself and staring at the ground until on a sudden he bounced his head against a post, which might have got out of his way if it had seen him coming, but it had been all the same if the king had come. Now this great bounce against the post put Mr. Decastro in mind of opposition, opposition of contradiction, and contradiction of his wife,—a very notable concatenation of ideas, and by no means inconsequent. Mr. Decastro now began to talk to himself in this manner:

“I begin to find that I have been a great fool—and that is one step towards getting wise, for he who thinks himself wise already takes no pains to become so: this is brother Bat’s doctrine, and I think there is something in it; but though I have been a great fool, my wife has always been very wise, though she was never able to account for it, or what place all her wisdom came from. Now I suppose with a little pains she can be made fool enough still to think herself the first female intellect on earth, and may be induced to forsake the world if she can be made to think herself above it: else how will these solitudes and unfrequented shades go down with her, in the midst of which I am come to a mind to take up my abode? As to the world I am not fit to live in it and will have done with it; a man should be made of flint to live in it, and

The History of Mr. John Decastro

not of wax, to be moulded in its fingers to what forms it pleases. I am one of that same ductile substance; this impression, however, is hardened in me, he that is the most in the world is the most in harm's way: but my wife sticks in my throat—how shall I get her to be of my mind? One that has so long been used to gay things, music, balls, and crowded rooms, how will she like to stretch her elbows here, where there are no assemblies, no routs, no press of fine folks to squeeze the breath out of her body? where she may walk for a month and never get trod upon? come into a room without being suffocated, or even have so much as a gown or a petticoat torn off her limbs? Something must be done, for what woman can live without getting her flesh rubbed off her bones in a crowd, or her ribs crushed together when all the world is in a room? My bones come no more into these mobs, I have been squeezed enough to content any moderate man, they are welcome to my room who shall never be again welcome to my company. These London mobs will crowd a man's house until there is no room for the master—they have elbowed me into the street once and that's enough: they shall elbow me out of no more houses, and, thanks be to heaven and my good brother, I have yet a good one left and something left to keep it warm too, more by all than ever I expected—I'll feed no more splendid gangs to eat me out of it—but my wife rises upon my stomach again like a thing that is hard of digestion—what shall I do to macerate and assimilate her into my plans? I am not very fond of forcing medicines in these matters: a woman is like a weather-cock, if she goes stiff, a little sweet oil will sometimes do the business—we must oil her over when we meet,

The History of Mr. John Decastro

and see how matters will be; then a little breath of wind, perhaps, will turn her like the weathercock aforesaid."

Mr. Decastro was walking at a good pace during this his soliloquy, for he was one of those extraordinary men who could walk and talk at the same time, when he stopped short all on a sudden, just as if he had run against another post,—a thought arrested him, that was the reason, and not, as some philosophers conjecture, because his soul had forgotten, at that moment, what string to pull, so pulled none at all, and left the machine of his body to come to a standstill. Now there being a thick wall of brambles on one side, and the waters of the lake on the other, if Mr. Decastro's soul had made any blunder and twitched this string instead of that, he might have got drowned or scratched, or set upon his head with his legs in the air,—no—a thought struck him and took up the attention of his soul so much that she threw down the reins of his body for a moment as if she had nothing else to do but think—a plan came into his head to manage his wife, to govern her and please her at the same time. Such a thought as that were enough to stop the earth in its orbit, turn its poles to the sun, hang the tropics upon the equator, make folks stare and sweat at Baffin's Bay, and the gentlemen who live in the torrid zone, call for their great coats and worsted stockings;—look you, reader, every bad thing gives a handle to pull some good thing into play.

Mrs. Decastro certainly had her good qualities, but the soil of her mind was crowded with a promiscuous vegetation, here a weed and there a flower. It is a very amazing matter, certainly, to find a woman with

The History of Mr. John Decastro

any bad quality at all in her composition; there is not one woman in ten millions that has any fault at all, and this made Mrs. Decastro a greater curiosity, for she had a fault, and that fault was vanity, a very new and a very extraordinary thing to be found in a lady.—It will be seen what uses Mr. Decastro made of it; he caught fast hold of her by it, and led her,—some men drive their wives like cattle,—led her where he pleased, and pleased her where he led her too—he made a great fool of her certainly, but what signifies that? It was a sign she was not born one, for then she would have been a fool ready made to his hand. There are male fools plenty, but there never was such a thing as a female fool, nor ever will be until the world is turned upside down.

Great things are seldom brought to pass in a little time; the project which Mr. Decastro had now upon the anvil cost him much thought, labour, pain, and oil.—But of this thus far. Matters were now prepared at the old castle for the reception of his family; the beds were all warmed, rooms well aired, owls and jackdaws smoked out of the chimneys, toads as broad as a pair of bellows, and lizards as long as a man's leg, had been driven out of the cellars, and the spiders had all notice to quit with a great broom at their tails. Mr. Decastro's dead stock had been come some time, and disposed of in the proper places under the eye and order of himself and Mrs. B. Decastro, when the day came to bring the living.

Mr. Decastro was walking, as usual, on the banks of the lake in a deep muse upon family matters, with more running in his head than was running out of it, his hat pulled over his eyes, his hands thrust into his

The History of Mr. John Decastro

breeches' pockets, and his cane stuck in his left boot, when, all on a sudden, he ran against Old Crab, who took it into his head to stand still, seeing him a coming, and put out an elbow to receive the momentum of his brother's body.

"How now, brother John?" quoth he. "I have brought your wife and family out of the south—hold up thine head, man, and look the world in the face again—all's paid, and your creditors kicked out of the creation."

Mr. Decastro was much affected at the sight of his brother, but we have not time to draw his picture, when bouncing upon Old Crab on a sudden made him feel just as if his heart was dipt in cold water. Shaking of hands and many thanks for services now passed, and sundry questions upon divers matters.—"What, is all mine in the north, brother Bat?"

Old Crab. Every acre, John, and the old castle to boot—all's sold in the south: but you will find bread and cheese here, and a good house to eat it in, if you have wit enough in your head to keep a good house over it, and know when you are well off. I have just put your wife and family into the castle, and come out to look for you.

Mr. Decastro. Well, but how can this be, brother Bat? my wife and I made out the aggregate debt to be—

O. C. A fool's reckoning—and what else could be expected when two fools laid their heads together? I paid away one hundred and ninety thousand pounds to redeem your body from your creditors, and your soul from the devil, I hope, at the same time, which is more to the purpose; for both were in a hopeful way, this

The History of Mr. John Decastro

running as fast into hell as that into a jail, and that they might both do at the same time and go the same way.

Mr. D. Brother Bat, the talk which we have had together has made another man of me: I believe all that you have told me to be true because I cannot prove it to be false; and I am apt to think it no very easy matter to deceive me; for, though books and I were never much acquainted, I never heard of a fool being born in our family.

O. C. Peace be to the fools, John! I remember when your mother was brought to bed of an ass; and the way in which you have gone on for some years past puts no great addition to the wisdom of the family: but you are come to be another man, you say, pray what sort of a gentleman is he?

Mr. D. One of your own making, brother Bat, as far as opinion goes; I am brought over by your arguments to your creed; there is more in them I will fairly own than I ever expected to find, or I can gainsay, which weighs not a little with me. I have got my catechism by heart, since you have been gone, can answer any question in it, and understand both question and answer by the help of your little book of explanations: in a word, I am become a Christian and am willing to be confirmed the first opportunity.

O. C. All's well if you hold in the mind, John; and you have been a stubborn piece of stuff:—be but as obstinate in the right as you were in the wrong, and you shall be made a missionary by order of government to convert London to Christianity; and it is high time it were looked to before we send out another cargo of parsons to convert the savages, when there is so much

The History of Mr. John Decastro

work to be done at home. I can't see what the plague can be expected in foreign parts when they have let the devil beat them upon their own dunghill.

Mr. D. The conversion of the place is like to be put off for the present, if it waits till I come into it; for by the glory of the stars I'll never run my head into the smoke of it again as long as the motion of my body lies under the direction of my will.

O. C. I say again, all's well, brother John, if you hold in the same mind; it is early days with you yet, time will try matters. Let us walk up to the castle, your wife and children will be glad to see you.

Mr. D. One word, brother, one word—

O. C. What dost hang back for, man? You're not afraid to see your wife?

Mr. D. Not altogether afraid, Brother Bat, but one word—did she come in good humour, ha, brother Bat? how did you get her out of London?

O. C. Get her out! Why, she was glad enough to come out, though she hung back a little at first, till I stuck spurs to her—she told me to my head that she would not come out. The devil you won't, madam! said I, but I'll make you glad to come out! so I sold the house over her head, packed up the furniture, and sent it into the north.

Mr. D. That was one way to bring her out. But to whom did you sell the house, brother Bat?

O. C. To the man you had a quarrel with, Lord Delamere—just the right sort of ferret to make the vermin bolt—this turned the tables, and instead of a hard matter to get her out, I had a hard matter to keep her in; she would have pushed the devil out of the way to have got out. When you bought the house

The History of Mr. John Decastro

of him, she and you together turned the man and his children into the street in a very civil way, with a pitchfork at their tails. If you have forgot it, she remembered it, and expected the pitchfork in her's; and she should have had it, if she had hung back. You will not come out? said I; but foregad you shall dance out when I play you a tune on the fiddle, I'll warrant you! I held my lord in check, or he'd have smoked her skin for her! The man would have set his own house on fire if he was sure of roasting her alive in it! He was so ravenous after her flesh, that he could have eat her with a bit of salt. She was in the devil of a fright! I never saw a woman in such a hurry to go the right way in my life!

Mr. D. I very well remember our usage of Lord Delamere's family, and am, I fairly confess, very heartily sorry for it. But no insult, I hope, was offered?

O. C. None at all. But come, it gets late, and I want my dinner.

And that was a very good reason for Old Crab's impatience; whereupon they walked into the castle.—We promised something more to come in our bill of fare to this chapter, but as it has run on to be something of the longest we hope to be excused if we put it at the beginning of the next.

CHAPTER VIII

Old Crab snaps at his Brother for telling Lies and making a Fool of his Wife—He, that is to say Mr. Decastro, sends his Sons Frederick and Acerbus to Eton School—Some Account of Old Crab's Ward, Genevieve de Roma.

MRS. DECASTRO was very much disappointed at the sight of the old castle, not because it was worse, but because it was a great deal better than she expected to find it, and this was a very lucky thing, and put her into very good humour. Old Crab had told her the debts were all paid, but not what was left to live upon; this, having cast up her husband's accounts, she conceived to be very little, indeed nothing, for the balance, as she had made it out and her husband together, lay all the other way; a circumstance which added not a little to her astonishment when she was told that they were to live in so grand a place. She posted about from room to room, found silk in this, satin in that, fine old tapestry in the other, and gazed with rapture and admiration at the painted windows and painted ceilings; but where the money was to come from that should keep them in such a place was the greatest wonder of all. Mr. and Mrs. Decastro falling to figures gave a very lucky push to Old Crab's plan, and added not a little to their panic; they got frightened indeed more than came to their share, but it gave no inconsiderable furtherance to their reformation; add to which, vanity ran on the side of their blunders;

they took it in their heads that they knew too much to be deceived, and they were willing to believe themselves ruined ten times over, rather than think it possible that such wise folks should commit any error in their calculations. Two people were never more glad to look like two fools, than when Old Crab let the cat out of the bag, and told them, for their comfort, that they were a couple of blockheads, that they had enough left, after all was paid, to set them up as great people in a great house. No two individuals ever confessed themselves to be great dunces with more satisfaction.

As soon as dinner was over, and the reader may remember that dinner was ready, and Old Crab very hungry at the end of the last chapter; as soon as dinner was over, at which two old women waited, which looked a little odd in such a magnificent place, but a new set of servants had scarcely as yet come into Mr. Decastro's head, as soon as dinner was over—we shall come to the point presently, as soon as we can get all these parentheses out of the way—as soon as dinner was over, Mr. Decastro caught his wife by the chin, as his manner was when earnest in any matter, and spake as followeth, *videlicet*:

Mr. D. I am going to make a confession which will astonish you more than ever you were astonished in your life: I have long since made a discovery, which I have always kept to myself, that you were a great deal wiser than me. I see, by your smile, that you are humble enough to take this for a thing said in jest, but you do yourself too much injustice, and my discernment at the same time, to suppose, that you have not a great deal more sense than me, and that I have not the penetration to find it out; if it be at all doubted,

The History of Mr. John Decastro

however, I can give some proofs of it. Your leaving London so readily is a sign that you have the good sense to despise it, that you lived in it, not because you could not live out of it, but because I lived in it, who was not above it but in it; immersed in it, and in love with it, you saw that town was my toy, my plaything, and though above it yourself, humoured me in it as a child. All this I have seen, but felt too much envy at your superior sense to own it till now that I am grown another man, a metamorphosed thing from what I was. To know and to confess that you are wiser than me, argues no mean alteration in me. My brother Bat has taught me some new lessons, one is, to pay every body what is due to them, whether it be money or merit; I therefore come to put his lessons in practice, and pay you what is due to you. I have been a long time your debtor, the debt is never the less due because it is long due. The gay and idle pleasures of the world, I own, I have ever been much in love with, notwithstanding the rare example I had daily in my sight, I mean yourself, who indulged me in my toys, and seemed pleased with them yourself, on purpose to please me, whom you loved as one loves a child, and pities at the same time he loves it. But I am now come to a determination to have done with these things, and am willing to put myself under your instructions and advice, how to get that contempt for all the fashionable follies of the world which you were ever ready to teach me had I but been as ready to learn. It shall go hard, but I will become a husband more deserving of such a wife; and in order to it I put myself into your hands like a child; you must guide my feet, teach me how to walk, and lend me a hand

until I can go without falling. My brother Bat has told me that he who is high in mind is low in merit, I humbly call upon you therefore to help the weak; to look down upon me, not to despise me, but to pity and raise me; not to think that I beg of you to give you credit for more than you are worth, but to bestow an alms which will make me rich without making you poor, for kind advice is not the least of alms-deeds.

Mrs. D. All you have just now said is very surprising, my dear, and argues a very great change in your sentiments and opinions, so great that I could scarce believe that it were you that have been talking: and I must confess that you certainly would have been much wiser than you are, if you had more frequently taken my advice, and been less obstinate in your own way: in regard to the pleasures of the gay world which have cost us a great deal and left us very little to show for it, they are little less than empty shells without kernels, chaff left by the wise for fools to purchase at ten times the price which they buy the grain itself for; this I believe to be very true, and we have had some experience of it which we shall do well to bring to good account. But in regard to our own matters, we have fallen into some very unaccountable errors which I own I am not a little astonished at, and how it would come I cannot see. If you had let me alone to cast up the bills and accounts by myself all might have been right enough, and we had no occasion to have frightened ourselves out of our wits in this manner; but you must poke in your nose, puzzling, and put every thing into confusion. I am glad, however, you see your own insufficiency at last, and find whereabouts it is that the fool sits in the family.—Yes, I confess, I am above the

The History of Mr. John Decastro

silly pleasures and pursuits of the gay world, and ever have been, and have dropped hints to that purpose from time to time in your ear, to just as good purpose as if I had taken a flint and steel and struck sparks into a basin of water. Now, my love, I must fairly own that I never heard you speak so much to the purpose, and so much truth in my life as you have just now done: not that I think any more highly of myself at all for what you have found in me, it is no news to me, but that you should have come to the knowledge of it is news indeed, and very much raises you in my good opinion; and I certainly think that the only way for you to come to be deserving of such a woman as myself, is to put yourself entirely into my hands, and leave the sole management of yourself and all your concerns to me. Every blunder, every mismanagement, every false step, and every foolish thing that has been committed in our family ever since we have been married, I think you have now the good sense to allow, should be entirely set down to your own account—your own pride, folly, obstinacy, self-conceit and self-will; and if the management of all had been wisely left to me, no ill thing at all would once have befallen us. Put yourself into my hands, my dear, put yourself entirely under my government, and I will finish in you what your good brother has so well begun.

Mr. D. But what if it be said that you rule your husband, my dear? How shall we avoid such a sad scandal as that? If I could get instructed by you without your being seen to rule me—

Mrs. D. If I tied you to a bed-post and gave you a good flogging every morning as soon as you got up, and every night before you went to bed, who is to

know any thing about the matter in such a place as this, unless the oak told it to the ash, the ash to the elm, and the elm to the sycamore?

Mr. D. Very true, my dear; a woman might chop her husband into little bits, and make mince-pies of him, and none the wiser in this sequestered spot; but the truly wise and the truly good will be so in a wilderness where none look on, as well as in a crowd where all look on. I should be as much astonished to see a woman of so much good sense do a thing in an uninhabited desert which were like to disgrace her, as be guilty of an act of merit in the middle of a town for the sake of being seen and getting praised for it.

Mrs. D. There is a glimpse of hope that all my good qualities will not be thrown away upon you—and I must own I have long since felt something like despair upon this matter. I begin to think better of Old Crab than ever; he certainly is a very sensible man; he had never opened such eyes as yours so effectually, and in so short a time else.

Mr. D. Why, my dear, I should not have said so much in your praise, certainly, if I had not known you to be a woman of too much good sense to hear it and get intoxicated by it—to be too much above all praise, to be at all influenced by it:—it is dirt under the feet of one whose head glitters amidst the stars.

At these words Mrs. Decastro arose to retire into the drawing-room, and a very grand apartment was prepared for that purpose, with a face so full of smiles that you could not have stuck a pin in it any where without running it into a smirk: some say that she staid till the very last moment in the dining-room—but

The History of Mr. John Decastro

what they mean by “the very last moment,” we cannot tell; it made a joke, however, amongst the ladies, who laughed when they heard it said, that she staid until the very last moment—but they will have a piece of fun sometimes to themselves. Old Crab, who had slept during great part of this talk between Mr. and Mrs. Decastro, and only catched here and there a sentence of it, now rubbed his eyes, and spake as follows:

O. C. It is no little mortification to a man of common sense that all the fools are not born dumb. To hear a thing of human proportions talk nonsense is enough to put one out of humour with the human figure. What a pity it is that a man should not only be a fool, but have it in his power to publish it by word of mouth! but the devil of it is, that the greatest fools are always the greatest talkers; just as if one needs talk as much as ten to convince others what a fool he is. I had rather see a fool vomit, at any time, than hear him talk; nothing could come from his stomach so offensive by half as what comes from his head. John, you cannot speak five words without committing a nuisance! what the plague d'ye tell your wife a pack of lies for to bring her over to your purposes? Why don't you tell her at once that if she has not a mind to live here she may look for her lodgings and be hanged—pack up and march?—What an ass art thou to pickle a rod for thine own back! Make your wife madam uppermost, and pull her down if you can. It is the whole work of some men's lives to keep their jades down and get nothing but their labour for their pains, and you must turn your own house into a school and go and take lessons of your wife in it, like a blockhead. You deserve to get your rump well clawed, and your head

well combed with a three-legged stool. It is ordered that the woman be obedient to the man, be in subjection to her husband, and learn of him at home, and not he of her. What art at, John? give your commands like a man, and not come down upon all fours like a brute, and bid the woman get upon your back and ride you like an ass. Adam must needs be such a fool as to be ruled by his wife, and you see what came of it; and you will get turned out of your house as he was out of Paradise, if you let madam have her head. Thou art folly to the brim, John; thou canst not take more of fool than thou canst hold, all the rest runs over and is wasted.

Mr. D. Look you, brother Bat, you mistake my aim, I would keep my wife in good humour and rule her at the same time. Why take a cudgel when the thing may be done by a little sugar-candy? I hate a broil, and if I can oil her over I see no great harm in that.

O. C. You will mend matters finely by telling the woman a great lie, though her pride will be sure to make her believe it. Thou shalt not do evil that good may come, brother John.

Mr. D. It is a profanation, brother Bat, to bring in the Bible to such frivolous matters; it can have nothing to do with compliments paid to the ladies, it were irreverence to name its name in such light and ludicrous things.

O. C. I am glad the Bible hath your reverence at last—but a lie is no light thing, brother John: get a habit of a thing and get rid of it if you can; a bad habit is no ludicrous matter. I am glad to find, however, that you have been reading your Bible since I

The History of Mr. John Decastro

have been gone; for you cannot well detect another in quoting a book without having read the book itself with some attention. But you can find no rules set down in it how to cheat and tell lies, I warrant. Do as the Bible bids you and you cannot be wrong, do other than it bids you and you cannot be right, John: but more of this another time. A word with you, sir; you'll make this minx as proud as old Satan, and if you and she fall out she'll cast your compliments, as you call them, in your teeth. You make her a goddess, and let her alone for exacting divine honours. Flattery is the key to a woman's heart, it unlocks the door and lets in the devil; and when he once gets in it will be more than one man's work to turn him out again, for the casting out of devils was always called a miracle. It is a wife's duty to obey her husband, and it is a husband's duty to use no undue means in order to such obedience; but if a man raises the devil in a woman's heart by way of guarantee to the performance of it, she will obey the devil indeed, but soon set her husband at defiance.

Old Crab was very sleepy, and yawned several times during the above speech, which may account, in some measure, for the breaks in it, and the dulness of it; when, giving his brother an earnest that he would renew the subject at another time, he took his hat and stick and made the best of his way to his farm.

Able politicians agree that in the composition of all wise governments, some evil is a very good thing; that is to say, if the devil have not some hand in the matter, there must needs be a sad flaw in the constitution. The devil is in it if all is not right then, when, if the

devil be not in it, all must be wrong. Mr. Decastro saw, and wisely, that the government of a wife were a matter of such importance that he never stuck at the means when he had such an end in his eye. Gentlemen are to do as they please with their wives, if their wives will be so good as to let them, certainly, and if a woman be not sweetened to a man's taste until he has made a great fool of her, why, surely, no wise woman on the face of the earth can have any the least objection to that.

The ladies, we doubt, will lose all patience at reading so far without coming to any love in our book. We beg in this place to make our apology, and say, that they will very soon come to a great deal of it, if they can but be content for a little: there will be no less than three very pretty girls to be disposed of, and they will have the inexpressible delight to see them all fairly eat up one after another.

Now, reader, lest we grow prolix, you must help us out a little with your imagination;—imagine, for instance, that Mr. Decastro, feeling the money to spring in his pockets again, hired servants, bought horses, put deer into his park, wine into his cellars, carriages into his coach-houses, built pineries, planted graperies, erected hot-houses, and called all his little necessary matters about him; for, upon the falling in of some good old leases, Old Crab, his trusty and faithful steward, raised his income to the noble sum of three and twenty thousand pounds a-year, bade him leave off playing the fool, and live like a gentleman.

Mr. and Mrs. Decastro now began to be a little settled in their chairs, and, to the end that madam might sit the more at her ease in her's, her good husband

The History of Mr. John Decastro

took care that she should have a soft cushion put under her particular. Every day discovered a new beauty, or a new excellence in her, which Mr. Decastro had never seen before.

But having just talked about three pretty girls, and made our readers' mouths water, we will now bring them a little acquainted with Old Crab's ward, Genevieve de Roma. Mr. Decastro had three sisters, two of which were what the world calls well-married, that is to say, one married the Earl of Budemere, and the other a baronet, Sir John Lamsbroke, of Lamsbroke Park; the third was what the world calls very ill-married, she married a Jew, named de Roma, who had two hundred pounds, and no more in the world. Now in the two former marriages there was a great deal of money but no love; in the latter a great deal of love, but no money. Margaret, for that was the name of her that bestowed her heart upon one of the circumcised, made her father exceeding angry at her choice, not because she chose a Jew, but because she chose one that was not as rich as a Jew.

"Peg," said the old gentleman, and swore a terrible oath, a vice he had, "if you marry the Jew, I'll not give thee a penny; discard Abimeleck, and thou shalt lie in my will for a good round sum of money."

Peggy, however, had no mind to part with her sweetheart, so she married him, and away they went together to the West Indies, and, what was very amazing, they did not sink the ship with the weight of their money. The Jew behaved like a noble fellow. He expected a large fortune with his wife; gold, however, was not the cement that stuck him to his Peggy, for her father was

as good as his word, he would not give her one farthing, but divided her fortune between her two sisters, who did not want money, and left poor Peggy with nothing but his curse to live upon. In a few years, however, the active Jew grew rich, and by industry, frugality, and care, got money as fast as he could count it. Abimeleck de Roma was honest and just in all his dealings, and much beloved; so much so, that a friend, who died in his neighbourhood, left him all his property; this, put to his own, set the Jew upon a mountain of gold. Now this was one of fortune's lucky hits. For once she bestowed her favours on a man of merit. But who can count a penny or a moment upon the good things of this world? Poor de Roma lost his Peggy in childbed of Genevieve, the only surviving child of eleven, and soon after died himself of a broken heart. Finding how matters were like to be, he converted all his property into money, and, leaving all to his infant daughter, made Old Crab, whom he well knew, her guardian and trustee. The will directed that the little orphan's money should be vested in the English funds, and, if occasion offered, that good part of it should be laid out in land. If the little girl should die before she grew to be of age, or to be married, Old Crab, who had been disinherited by his father, should stand in reversion to the whole property. She should be bred in the best school that was to be had, and suitably in all respects to her large fortune, which amounted at that time to one hundred thousand pounds.

Of all children ever seen in the world, Genevieve, during the first ten years of her life, was, perhaps, the most ugly and disgusting: but what astonished people the most was her size, vast strength, and fierceness of

The History of Mr. John Decastro

mind. She got the name of the young dragon, and none could manage her, for none she feared, except Old Crab, who made no scruple to take a cudgel to her when she was in her *tantrums*, and give her a sound drubbing. At the age of ten she was sent to the best school in London, and, by the good management of the people there, her devil was cast out, or rather tamed, and she began to show some signs of beauty both in face and figure. She suddenly grew tall, and her face from being broader than it was long to grow longer than it was broad; her complexion, which had always looked like soot mixed with fuller's earth, cleared up into a fine brunette, and her features, as if touched by some magician's wand, grew astonishingly beautiful; her hair and eyes were as black as jet; the form of her face Grecian; she was very large, but finely shaped, and quite six feet in height.—But of Genevieve thus far.

Now, reader, we have made a great blunder, which, we dare engage for thy sagacity, thou hast long since discovered, and if thou hast not, thou art not a little mortified, we think, at its having made its escape from thine observation; but, perhaps, thou hast found enough besides to make thine acuteness ample amends.—We should have put the boys the first, and Genevieve the last, for so we gave it out in the title to the chapter. We may plead good-breeding, however, and let the lady go first, and the gentlemen, as is fit, come after.

The tables and chairs were now all set in their places at the castle, and every body knew where to look for salt, and where to find the mustard: the old women

The History of Mr. John Decastro

were put to scrub floors and wash dishes; and when Mrs. Decastro rang her bell, a butler, or a fine footman in a superb livery, made his appearance, and waited her commands. As for Mr. Decastro, his moulting time was over, and he looked sleek and spruce all in new feathers. Mrs. Decastro had poked her nose, at least three times over, into every crack and corner of the castle, stared at the magnificent towers without, and the grand painted ceilings within, until her eyes ran with water. As soon as the newness of the old castle was a little rubbed off, Mrs. Decastro began to grow restless in the midst of grandeur. What is the good of a fine thing, if one cannot show it to another? She began to want sadly to see company again, for here was no soul but Old Crab and his wife and little Julia, her husband, the two boys, and young Genevieve. Poor woman! she was like to be moped to death! and, what was worse, was afraid to own it, for her husband had plied her so closely with doses of adulation, that she was quite sick of her own virtues. It is an ill wind that blows nobody any good, as Queen Elizabeth said of ——.*

* Once, making a low obeisance to the Queen, before the whole court, this stately and inflated peer suffered a mischance, which has happened, it is said, on a like occasion—it was light as air! . . . He resolved from that day to be "a banished man," and resided for seven years in Italy, living in more grandeur at Florence than the Grand Duke of Tuscany. On his return he presented the Queen with embroidered gloves and perfumes, then for the first time introduced into England. Part of the new presents seem to have some reference to the Earl's former mischance. The Queen received them graciously, and was even painted wearing these gloves; but my authority states, that the masculine sense of

The History of Mr. John Decastro

Mrs. Decastro had been blown into such high latitudes by her husband's praises, that she could have been glad at times to have got safe back again with all her heart. She found it very troublesome to be very good and very excellent, and to be made a goddess. It put such a restraint upon her, that she was forced to be better than she used to be, at times, to save her credit, though she was willing to make her husband's words good, at as little expense as possible. She was ashamed to say she was dull at Oaken Grove, or show any discontent, because such a sensible woman as she was, forsooth, had too many resources in herself to stand in any need of those toys, playthings, and fiddle-faddles, that took up the time and attention of women of inferior minds—she would not have gone to a ball, if she had come within hearing of the fiddles, not she—no—she was put far above all such giddy childish trifles; she was made too wise to regard these things, she was not as other women were; she had put her sex under her feet; she had too much vanity not to be very good, too much pride not to be a piece of excellence.

Now she could have been very glad to have got all these fine things for nothing, but the pity of it is that the finer every thing is the more it unluckily costs us. Mrs. Decastro could have been glad enough to have stood above others, and kept the precedence which her husband gave her, but she did not, and for this reason,

Elizabeth could not abstain from congratulating the noble coxcomb; perceiving, she said, that at length my lord had forgot the mentioning the little mischance of seven years ago! (D'Israeli's "Curiosities of Literature," vol. ii., "Secret History of Edward Vere, Earl of Oxford.")—*Editor's Note.*

viz., because she could not. Some good, however, came of those evil means which Old Crab condemned, she took it into her head to come to church to shore up the reputation of being both wise and good, since the wisest and best people of all ages have ever been the most religious.

But we have forgot the boys again!—Mr. Decastro was got at his old work one day, making his wife some fine compliments, when, having had tickling enough to serve for once, she put a finger into one of her husband's button-holes, and, hooking him to her, spoke as follows:

“ My dear, your brother Bat said in his sermon last Sunday, that it was very wicked to have store of good things and keep all to ourselves. This was certainly intended as a hint to us who have store of good things and keep all to ourselves. Now in regard to the pleasures and amusements of the giddy and the loose, you very well know how much I am above them, and how little I set by them, but charity forbid that we should have much and none be the better, for so your brother Bat held forth in the pulpit. We have magnificent rooms, but nobody comes into them. We have cellars full of fine wines, but nobody comes to taste a glass. We have a grand park full of fine deer, but nobody comes to eat a bit of venison. We have a train of fine footmen that are paid to view their persons in the looking-glasses. We have a butler and an under-butler that have nothing to do but suck one another's thumbs: things standing in this posture what are we doing but wasting those things which others would be happy to partake in the enjoyment of? What is avarice but the worst sort of waste? What is griping all to oneself but

The History of Mr. John Decastro

avarice? What is charity but a distribution? What is generosity but calling our friends about us, and tasting the good things which heaven has given us together? What is charity but a duty? What generosity but a virtue? If I am to live in the middle of a great wood here, I must beg to make a few conditions."

"Name them," quoth Mr. Decastro.

"A few friends," quoth she.

"Granted," quoth he.

"That the boys be bred in the world," quoth she.

"Hum," quoth he.

"The boys are young at present, but when birds-nesting time is over with them what can they find to do in a wood?—If I am invited to a friend's house, though it be in London, I must have leave of absence for two or three months in a year."

"Granted," quoth he.

"Four horses to my carriage."

"Granted," quoth he.

"Be allowed the same for pin-money as usual."

"Granted," quoth he.

"Well, but the boys," quoth she.

"What of the boys?" quoth he.

"Send them to a public school," quoth she.

"Send them to the devil," quoth he.

"The devil will find them out in private, as well as in public," quoth she.

"Hum," quoth he, and "Hah!" quoth Old Crab, who had just come into the room unobserved, "you have set up your wife for an idol, so come down upon your knees and worship her, you great blockhead!"

"You will run all risks of my taking your advice?" said Mr. Decastro to his wife.

The History of Mr. John Decastro

“I will,” quoth she—“all the merit of the thing, if it turn out well, being mine.”

“And all the blame,” quoth he, “if the thing turn out ill, being your’s also?”

“Well,” quoth she, “but whose fault is it to be, if you are no judge, if my advice should be taken?”

“If the thing turn out well,” quoth he, “you will have all the merit of the advice; but, if ill, am I to have all the blame for acting upon it?”

“Come,” quoth she, “we had best leave no stones to break windows, we will share and share alike.”

“But,” quoth he, “you will not blame me if the thing turn out ill, because I took your advice?”

“Neither,” quoth she, “if it turns out well shall you carry all the merit—at all events the merit of the advice will be mine.”

“It needs must,” quoth he, “as well as the blame, if matters come wrong, be your’s also. Look you, my dear, I have a right of choice to do as I please, you know, you must needs lay that down: well, you give advice—I take it or refuse it as I will—if I take it and it falls out ill, you have the blame of the ill advice, and I the blame for taking it. If I take it and it fall out well, I have the merit of taking it, and you the merit of the good advice.”

“Come,” quoth she, “I’ll risk my share, take it.”

Mr. Decastro did so, and soon afterwards ordered his carriage and wheeled off his seed to Eton College.

CHAPTER IX

Some Account of John Mathers, otherwise called Old Comical.

READER!—your memory is better than ours—hath not the name of John Mathers, alias Old Comical, already been seen in this our history? To ask a question is not to affirm a thing—if we were to say it had when it had not, Horace's *Dormitat** may bring off old Homer, who may take a nap without getting his bones broken, when all the Horaces in the world would not save ours from being knocked into splinters. 'Tis no matter, let be, if it has not it shall and will be, and that's enough; for we hate the plague and trouble of looking back into what we have written, a plague and trouble which some would be glad to suffer if they could catch us napping, as Horace says. But we shall go to sleep, now and then, for all that, so let people make their best of it; and if we put you to sleep, reader, folks must take a little refreshment on

* A reference to the lines of Horace:—

Et idem

Indignor quandoque bonus dormitat Homerus,
Verum operi longo fas es obrepere somnus.

—*De Arte Poetica.*

Which are thus translated by Conington:

While e'en good Homer may deserve a tap,
If, as he does, he drop his head and nap,
Yet when a work is long, 'twere somewhat hard
To blame a drowsy moment in a bard.

—*Editor's Note.*

their journey as well through a book as through the world.

But who is John Mathers?—the son of 'Squire Mathers, Lord of the Manor of Cock-a-doodle of Cock-a-doodle Hall, Northamptonshire, Justice of the Peace, one of the Quorum, and Custos Rotulorum. The students of the University of Göttingen, for there was he bred, gave him the name of Old Comical, a merry seed was he,—when comes there such another?

His father was a pretty gentleman of the place and county aforesaid, with money in his pockets, and dirt to his boots, it might be some three or four thousand pounds per annum: he would laugh, heaven rest his merry soul and forgive it its sins, for it was a vice he had, aye, he would laugh—it would do a man's heart good to hear him. He fell into a fit of laughter one day, and laughed till he was ready to die; and, taking it into his head that a man could not die at a pleasanter moment, he laughed as long as he lived, which might be five minutes; and when the old women laid out his body they all fell a laughing, for death had left his laugh upon his face as fresh as if the joke had been that moment cracked.

Hearing of his father's death, Old Comical came home to have an eye to his father's will, if any might be, and see how he stood for bread and butter. Now there was put over Old Comical's nose a thing called an Elder Brother, whom he found in full feather at Cock-a-doodle Hall, heir at law to all his father's property, and his nose above the stars. Was there no will? —none: at least so his brother told him; and as for lies there never had been one told in the family.

A lie is one of the handiest things that was ever in-

The History of Mr. John Decastro

vented; it was a wonder, wasn't it, that they never found out its sundry and manifold uses in this family? A lie brings many an honest man into house and land, who might have dined upon a hedgehog, and gone to bed in a ditch and told the truth—starved all the flesh off his bones and turned them into a multiplication table, like old Napier, the renowned mathematician.

“What,” quoth Old Comical, “has my father left me nothing?”

“Not a penny,” quoth the young esquire.

“Sume my body,” quoth Old Comical, “what have I done to be sent empty away?”

“A man might ask that question and not get another to answer him,” quoth the young esquire.

Old Comical found it to be a waste of good breath to talk to a man who had run into the world before him and won the sweepstakes, so, finding that the very dirt on his shoes was not his own, and that he were like to stand upon other people's ground, was willing to be at least as merry upon it as the owner, so he sat down under a hedge and wrote a song, and, begging a bit of board of a carpenter, being asked to pay for it he put three legs in it, and, mounting the stool, sung the carpenter his ballad. The carpenter was very well satisfied with the song, and suffered Old Comical to depart in peace; who went into the next town, and eating a good dinner, and drinking thereafter a pot of the best ale, fell fast asleep at an ale house fire-side. It growing late the landlord gave Old Comical a push and told him it was time to pay his reckoning and be going; whereupon Old Comical mounted his stool, and, pulling out his ballad, sung the same in the ear of the landlord.

As soon as the landlord had done laughing, for it was a very merry song, he again pointed to the chalk upon the door, and again demanded his money; upon which Old Comical rose upon his stool a second time, and sung his song over again, and made such a din, and raised such peals of laughter, for the neighbours, hearing a merry sound, were gathered round the door, that the landlord's voice was drowned in music and merriment.

At length, finding that he were like to get nothing but music for his good cheer, he set his foot upon that side of Old Comical that comes after all his other sides, and bade him get along for a pleasant rascal: so he took his stool under his arm and went into a lodging-house, and having ordered a good bed, got into it and slept very well. On the morrow the mistress of the house told him, with a gentle rap at the door, it was time to get up; whereupon up rose Old Comical, and put on his clothes, and coming down stairs payment was demanded for his night's lodging: upon which Old Comical asked the landlady if she loved music? Yes, she loved music very well, she said, but what was that to the purpose?—she begged he would pay and be gone.

“All the better,” quoth he, pulling out his ballad, and stepping up on his stool. She stared. “It is all the better, I say,” quoth Old Comical, with a preliminary flourish, “it is all the better;” and forthwith Old Comical sang his ballad three times over.

The landlady, smelling out the trick, for still as she dunned Old Comical sung, sent one for the constable, who was not silent on the way, and soon brought back, not only the constable, but a hundred people along

The History of Mr. John Decastro

with him as good fun would have it, and they surrounded the door of the lodging-house, and saw Old Comical mounted on his stool, with his ballad in one hand and his hat and wig in the other.

Seeing company were come, Old Comical began again, and the people, gathering the story presently, called aloud for silence and then for the ballad: thereupon Old Comical broke out with greater rapture; the landlady scolded, Old Comical sung, and the folks laughed, and they made a great noise altogether.

Now it so befel at this time that the justice of the peace rode that way, and hearing a noise, and seeing the constable with his staff in the midst of the people, he was fain to hear the news. One telling his worship the story, the justice, casting his eye upon Old Comical mounted on his stool, as aforesaid, gave his countenance to the riot, and fell a laughing with the rest: and no wonder, for the very sight of Old Comical would make any man laugh. His face was as red as fire, upon which half a dozen warts, as big as red gooseberries, and much of the same colour, had disposed themselves at certain distances from one another, the largest of which sat upon the roof of his nose: he had another on his chin hanging thereat by a slender stalk, like the little fruit aforesaid. He had another on his forehead, which was never seen but when he laughed, for at that time his features were all drawn together in the middle of his face, and the said wart came down from under his wig in a very odd manner: his nose was irregular, turned up at the point, and hitched up on one side, and the wings thereof very wide. He was so deeply marked by the smallpox that his face looked like a red honey-comb, so deeply pitted that a towel was of little

use to him; and, being a neat man, he used to clean his face with a brush, which very much increased his natural floridity.

Old Comical was as bald as a doll, and his pate was seamed and lined all over like a map of the roads. His eyes were dark blue, clear as crystal and very fine, one of which he almost always kept shut, like one taking aim, so he passed with many for a man of one eye, till he convinced them of their mistake by a sudden stare, which had such oddity in it as made people laugh. He had a very wide mouth and throat, so that when he laughed one might almost see what he had in his stomach. He had a very fine set of teeth, which he showed all at one grin: the retractive muscles of the upper lip gave him astonishing powers of grimace, and though his mouth was very wide, and his lips very protuberant, such was the force of the sphincter oris, that he could gather them up into a little wrinkle, which he usually did before he broke out into a loud laugh. He had five or six different voices, which he used each as occasion served, and two or three of them were such odd noises, that no man could hear them without laughing. He sung an excellent song, and when he pleased his voice was as clear as a bell. Nature made him on purpose for a droll, and he had such a variety of humour that one never grew tired of him.

As soon as he had finished his ballad, which he had been made to sing several times over, the justice bade the constable bring him out, and began to remonstrate with him for singing such a nasty song.

“You must be come to a sad pitch of impudence to sing such a nasty song before all these people,” said

The History of Mr. John Decastro

the justice, "and I have a mind to put you into the stocks for it."

"Sir," said Old Comical, "I don't see what harm there can be in nastiness when it sets folks a laughing; a man's sand runs merrily, an it please your worship, when we put him into his *teh-he's* and *ha ha's*—these are precious moments—put a man into the stocks for making folks merry!—see what comes of doing the world a good turn!"

"You rascal," quoth the justice, "you may do the world a good turn without turning its stomach, and I have a mind to have you whipped; your dirty song is an offence to decency and good manners."

"The world's stomach is not so soon turned," quoth Old Comical, "it is no such squeamish matter, it were as good as forty shillings if I could set the world a vomiting and bring the devil up, the devil is in its bowels and sets it a hankering after forbidden fruits: it were a special good emetic, and it like your worship, that cast out old Satan! Has not your worship enough to do to see the pots of ale well filled, that the bread be heavy enough, the cheese well weighed out, all the bastards paid for, and that no cruel grocer circumcise a pot of butter? Nastiness indeed! let nasty words alone—they are but as the wind that blows—and look to nastier deeds: the nicer folks' ears the nastier their fingers! Look to dirty hands, old Quorum, look to dirty hands—you must be come to a fine pass if a beggar's ballad be the greatest nuisance in your parish! a man may go a long way before he can sing a song in such another!"

Upon which Old Comical began to quaver, as if he would sing again. The justice, though he could not

help laughing, threatened to put him into the stocks; upon which Old Comical said:

“Put them into the stocks that give me encouragement, they are the most to blame: why don’t you teach your people better things than to be pleased with a poor ballad-singer? If they do wrong it is your fault who stand over the hundred with the cat-o-nine-tails in your hand—lay it on where it is wanted, or be stripped at the whipping-post for not doing your duty: flog me the last, and where will you find a rod? when all have enough let me come in for the scraps. If all are whipped that should be, let me sell whipcord.”

Upon which some present cried out that Old Comical had put the justice down, and the people pressed on all sides to buy his ballad, of which he had copies ready in his pocket: and it had a good sale, but the more he sold the more he raised the price, for, being asked, he said the scarcer things grew the dearer they came, and he sold his last ballad for sixpence: and now, having sold all he had save one, he put his stool under his arm, and forthwith put himself upon his journey, when the landlady caught Old Comical by the skirt, and told him she would be paid for his bed.

“What d’ye charge for your bed?” quoth he.

“A shilling,” quoth she.

“That’s not enough,” quoth he.

“Not enough!” quoth she. “We’ll say eighteen-pence then.”

“Eighteen-pence!” quoth he; “why, I should have expected to pay eighteen-pence if I had slept on a cow’s-hide.”

“Come,” quoth she, “I’ll be content with two shillings, pay and begone.”

“Two shillings!” quoth he, “what for a night’s lodging in such a house as your’s—why, I should be charged at least half-a-crown, near London, if I slept in a fish-kettle: folks in the country don’t know what to ask for their things, and that’s the reason they are all so poor. I can make due allowance for the ignorance of country-people, but if any had asked a man of my rank in London less than five shillings for my night’s lodging, I should have taken it as an affront to my person and appurtenances.—A shilling for my bed! pray, good woman, whom do you take me for? d’ye think I came into your house to be insulted? I must tell you that I was born at Cock-a-doodle in Northamptonshire, and have a brother now living who is not only a very great man, but what is more, is a justice of the peace, high sheriff for the county, and lord of the manor of Cock-a-doodle!”

Upon which Old Comical shook his tail, and marched off in great wrath, without paying a farthing.

The next town he came to he went into a tailor’s shop and was measured for a full suit of clothes, all of the finest cloth, and gave orders that the waistcoat should have a broad gold lace put on it; and then he bespoke a new pair of boots at a shoe-maker’s, and ordered the men to work immediately. When dressed, he walked into an inn and bespoke breakfast, dinner, supper, and a bed. The landlord cast his eye upon the gold lace on Old Comical’s waistcoat, and made a low bow. The next morning the waiter brought the bill.

“What’s that?” quoth Old Comical.

“It is your bill, sir.”

“How dare you bring me a bill, you scoundrel?” quoth he.

“I beg your honour’s pardon,” quoth the waiter, “it was my master’s order that I should.”

“O ho!” quoth Old Comical, “was it so?—send your master to me this moment.”

In came the landlord. “Was it by your order that I have a bill brought in?” quoth he.

“I heard your honour was going, and it is usual to be paid before people leave my house.”

“Waiter! go this moment for a constable; I’ll make your master know who is at home, I’ll warrant him!”

Upon this the landlord looked like one at his wit’s ends. The moment the constable made his appearance, and cast his eyes upon Old Comical’s waistcoat, he felt great awe, and humbly begged to know what was the matter?

“Matter!” quoth he, “have you brought some stout fellows along with you?”

“Yes, an please your honour, half a dozen are at the door, for we have always a disturbance at the Bull, I think.”

Now in came the shoe-maker, and in came the tailor, each man with his bill upon Old Comical, who began to make such a noise, that none could be heard to speak but himself; he charged the landlord, and the tailor, and the shoe-maker, with some dreadful crime each, which he should make appear in another place, and bade the constable do his duty, and take care to have the rascals forthcoming. Upon which the six fellows aforesaid rushed in with the constable at their head, and seized the landlord, the tailor, and the shoe-maker, and away they hauled them, say what they could, and in a terrible fright at their being taken into custody. Old Comical marched in the rear, and hav-

The History of Mr. John Decastro

ing seen all put under lock and key, he walked quietly out of the town without let or molestation.

As soon as he got clear of the place, he untied his bundle and put on his old clothes, turned his wig, which had been well powdered (*gratis*), inside out, took his stool under his arm and his ballad in his hand, and, being presently overtaken by some, who pursued him, he mounted his stool and sung them his ballad. Being much entertained therewithal they were fain to hear the song again, and when they had done laughing, inquired if he had seen a gentleman dressed in blue and gold?

“This moment mounted his coach and four,” quoth he, “and gone off, on a full gallop, to the right,” showing them a road that branched off on that hand: upon this they put spurs to their horses and were out of sight in a moment.

Old Comical followed them as the safest way, and coming to a gentleman’s house changed his clothes, rang at the gate, and asked if the master were at home? The servant said that he was not.

“What’s become of him?” quoth Old Comical.

“He was sent for by the landlord of the Bull, at the next town, to stand his friend in a troublesome matter.”

“O!” quoth he, “that’s the very business I am come upon; I am an old friend of your master’s; lay a cloth upon a table in any room at hand, and bring in what cold meat you have, for I can’t wait while any be dressed; I have papers on this and other business for your master, who will return, perhaps, in an hour.”

He not returning, Old Comical, as soon as he had eat a good dinner and drank what he pleased, told the servant he could then stay no longer, but ordered some

The History of Mr. John Decastro

paper and wrote a note to the master of the house as follows:

SIR: A friend has called at your house to say, that the oldest relation you have in the world is dead: make what use of this intelligence you may think most for your own interest.

A FRIEND.

As soon as the master of the house returned, he received the note from the servant who had orders to give it, and getting into a post-chaise with four horses, set off full speed the Lord knows whither.

Old Comical, who lay by and saw him go off, came back again into the house and told the servant he was invited to a bed there by his master, whom he met on the road; and here Old Comical staid two days, and was very hospitably entertained by the lady of the house, who told him he had done her and her husband, some how or other, a very great service. Whereupon Old Comical waxed exceeding merry, sung his ballad to the lady and her two daughters, who were young ladies of great elegance and delicacy, ate and drank of the best, and slept on a bed that was fit for a king. The day after Old Comical came into the house he sounded the lady upon her husband's return, and, feeling his ground, knew how long he could stay in it.

On the morning of his departure, he was very much pressed to give the lady and her two daughters a little more of his company, for they had laughed day and night, both asleep and awake, as long as Old Comical had taken up his abode with them, but he made his excuses and thanks, and took his leave; whereupon one of the young ladies, who had fallen in love with him,

The History of Mr. John Decastro

wept bitterly. Having walked a dozen miles, he met a post-chaise coming on full speed with four horses, he stopt it, and asked a gentleman who was riding in it if the chaise had been taken at the last town? The gentleman said he had hired it at the last town. Upon which Old Comical begged the gentleman, if he had not had the smallpox, to get out that moment, for he knew the chaise, that very chaise, to have conveyed a patient in the last stage of the distemper to an hospital. The gentleman, who, as it happened, had not had the smallpox, jumped out of the chaise in a moment, and fell to spitting and blowing his nose, and thanking Old Comical, who helped him out with the luggage, put his own in its place, and bidding the drivers make the best of their way home, jumped into the chaise and rode away like a prince, leaving the gentleman and his portmanteau to pursue their journey on foot. He had not gone far before a butcher outrode the chaise with a buttock of beef on his tray before him.

“Hoi!” quoth Old Comical, “I am going there, and will take your beef for you, it will save you a little trouble.” The butcher, knowing the post-chaise and the drivers very well, put his buttock in at the window. “Drive on,” quoth Old Comical; and away he went with a piece of beef that weighed five stone on the steelyards.

CHAPTER X

In Continuation.

UPON seeing a town at some little distance, Old Comical called to the drivers to stop, with great prudence, at the corner of a wood, who, by the familiar manner in which he had addressed him, concluded that he was an old acquaintance of the gentleman, whose place he had taken in the post-chaise, and whom they knew very well to be the master of the house whereat Old Comical had been so kindly received by the lady and her two daughters. They waited, therefore, with great patience for the return of Old Comical out of the wood, conceiving some little necessity had called him aside. The town clock presently struck, which is a thing that puts a man as much in mind of time as any other; so Tom said to Dick,

“Shall we call to the gentleman?”

“No, no,” said Dick to Tom, “we had best not disturb him, though he stays longer than I expected;” their patience, however, getting upon the ebb, one dismounted, and going to the wood side, called out, “Are you a coming, sir?”

Upon getting no answer, Tom said to Dick, “Go into the wood, the gentleman may have met with an accident, and be dead, for any thing we know.”

As soon as Dick had searched as long as he thought good, he came out of the wood just as wise as he went into it, and looking into the chaise, said,

The History of Mr. John Decastro

"Why, Tom, the gentleman has taken out his luggage!"

This had not been observed; for the drivers, supposing he got out for some little matter, did not look behind them for good manners, when Old Comical made his escape into the wood; and there being a gate and a path, they supposed also that he might be within a short walk of the house which he was engaged at, so they e'en drove the chaise (which had been paid for) to their inn without giving themselves any further trouble.

As soon as Old Comical had proceeded into the thickest part of the wood, he left the path, and getting into a brake of holly bushes, changed his clothes, wisely judging that the less show he made at present the better, and that a man dressed in a suit of blue and gold with a buttock of beef at his back might make folks take more notice of him than made for his interest; for though his cloth was large, what with his clothes, his stool, and the beef, the meat he found must needs be seen at one corner or another. So having bestowed all matters with much wisdom, and cut a strong stick out of the wood, he thrust one end of it through a knot in his handkerchief, and away he trudged with his meat and his clothes on his shoulder.

He grew hungry, which is apt to come of long fasting, and spying a gang of gypsies sitting round a great pot, he made a bargain with them, and got his beef well boiled for nothing; for as soon as it was done, he told them a story which frightened them out of their wits, and they ran away and left their fire, and their pot, and Old Comical to shift for themselves. Having cleared his ground, he laid hands upon half a loaf of

bread which, as the gypsies had left, might be well supposed to be of no further use to them, and taking a good slice of beef ate a good dinner.

He then arose, and packing up the residue of his meat, walked on, when the path on which he was, forming a sort of half circle, brought him into the very road which he had lately quitted. Finding this, he made a full stop, and wisely judging it to be a little of the dangerous, having, by some late exploits, made it the road to fame, he tacked about and changed it for another, being minded to make the best of his way to London, thinking it not unlikely, no honesty standing in the way, that he might come to riches and honours in that celebrated city.

It now grew towards sunset, and, having lain in lavender of late, he thought a bed as good as a dry ditch to pass the night in: but as he had quite as lief get a good bed for nothing as pay for a night's lodging, he stopt at the door of a parsonage-house, having changed his clothes and hid his wallet in a hedge. Upon the parson coming, to answer the knock at his door, as soon as he saw the gold lace on Old Comical's waistcoat, took a step back out of respect, as who should say, "I know my distance."

"Mr. Terry," quoth Old Comical, having got his name from one on the road, for he seldom let a man pass without getting something out of him, "I have, here, a letter, which a friend of mine requested me to leave at your house, if I found you not at home; if I found you there, to deliver it safely into your own hands; and, if it required an answer, to wait for the same, and be the bearer thereof."

"My name," quoth the parson, "certainly is Terry,

The History of Mr. John Decastro

and the letter (which Old Comical, having picked up some intelligence from a clown, had written) is directed to me:" upon which the parson opened it, and, with no little astonishment, read as follows:

SIR: The late vicar, to whose living you have been lately presented, and whom you lately buried, with what conscience must be left to you, was put into his grave before he was dead, and the body, luckily for him, being stolen, it came to its senses under a surgeon's dissecting knife upon receiving a gash in the abdomen: the poor man, though at present in a very weak state, is daily recovering at the house of a friend, and will, as soon as well, claim his living at your hands; now as this affair will undergo a strict investigation, as he was supposed to die in your house, and you had been promised the next presentation, I have made a friend the bearer of this letter, who, for some reasons, must withhold my name, in order to give you an opportunity to collect matter for your defence in this extraordinary case; as the vicar will swear that he heard you say, after he was nailed down, though totally deprived of speech and motion, that if he were not quite dead it would not be long before he were, and that was all one, as he was given over by his physicians, and so he was handed into his grave. Now, sir, the bearer of this letter, being himself the very surgeon who gave the body the slash in the belly, by way of preface to his lecture in anatomy, and under whose hands the corpse again became a vicar, will save me any further trouble, and satisfy you in all matters on which you please to question him.

I am, sir, your

ANONYMOUS FRIEND.

This dreadful letter, as well it might, turned the poor parson into stone. Recovering, he fixed his eyes on Old Comical, and asked him if all were true?

Upon which he said he had a long story to tell, and begged to sit down. The parson hoped his amazement might excuse his incivility in keeping a gentleman of his appearance standing at the door, very courteously showed him into a room and offered him a chair. Old Comical began a story which lasted three hours and twenty minutes, and great part thereof was told in the dark, for night fell an hour at least before the story was ended, and so fixed was the parson's attention, that, until one called him to supper, he scarcely knew where he was.

As they walked into the supper-room, "All this," quoth the parson, "is very strange and very shocking; but, sir, I have a great many questions to put upon this dreadful matter, and must beg for your stay here until I am satisfied in all points."

"I will sup with you, and take a bed, if you please," quoth Old Comical—"Nay, I am determined to eat, drink, and sleep with you as long as you have a question to ask." So the parson, his wife, and Old Comical sat down to a couple of boiled fowls and oyster sauce.

The parson's wife, who had catched the lucky moment to hear the letter read by her husband, felt as if she should burst before she could get to the nearest house in the village to tell the news, and the first to hear it was the late vicar's wife, who had just married her footman. This lady, upon hearing that her former husband was come to life again, fell into a fit to the no small disturbance of her family.

Betty Elbowgrease, maid-servant in the house, who had as good a knack at listening as the parson's wife for her heart, and quite as eager to tell any news, ran out into the village and told the story to all she met,

The History of Mr. John Decastro

with additions. And away went the news, aye, on the wings of the wind, and put the whole neighbourhood into a flux from one end to the other! Mrs. Kicksey told it to Mrs. Wicksey, and Mrs. Wicksey told it to Mrs. Cock, and Mrs. Cock told it to Mrs. Jimcrack, and Mrs. Jimcrack told it to Mrs. Jiggumbob, and Mrs. Jiggumbob told it to Mrs. Shufflebottom, and Mrs. Shufflebottom told it to Mrs. Blueknuckle, and Mrs. Blueknuckle told it to Mrs. Devilsgizzard and her seven daughters, and every one added something to the story. The old women ran into knots in the street, and took a great deal of snuff upon it the next morning. The baker carried the story out with his bread, and the butcher carried it out with his meat, the brewer with his beer, and the barber with his soap and razors, and cut a great slice out of the squire's chin in the heat of the story. Colds, fevers and agues, were caught by many, who ran out of their houses without their hats, cloaks, bonnets and great coats, in the rain, to spread the news.. Mrs. Qualm came at seven months, Mrs. Scramblebottom miscarried of twins, Mrs. Thimbletail came with a still-born child, and Mrs. Crincumcrankum was brought to bed in her larder, all alarmed at the story!

Old Comical ate a hearty supper and slept well in the best bed at the vicarage. He arose the next morning as blithe as a lark and ate fifteen muffins and drank one-and-twenty dishes of tea for his breakfast.

“Sir,” said the parson, “I am as innocent of all laid to my charge as the babe unborn, and had sooner been intombed myself than buried any man alive. The late vicar, who was my uncle, certainly died in my house, in which every attention was shown and every care

taken of him that could be, and I am sure, for my own particular," quoth the parson, with tears, "I loved him as if he had been my father. He was the best friend I ever had in the world, and I had sooner died myself than have lost one whom I had so much regard for."

Old Comical, who was as silent at breakfast as he had been at supper, took care that no idle conversation should engage him at times of such importance, wisely judging that when his belly was full, his mouth would be empty, and might talk when it had nothing better to do.

"Mr. Terry," said he, when he had eat till he was tired, "I am your very humble servant and all that: which is as much as to say that I should be happy to serve you in any matter which might tend to clear up your character in this affair: but I would have you to understand that I am not the man who bought your uncle's body, though I confess I gave him the aforesaid cut in the belly: it was the gentleman who wrote the letter that purchased the corpse, and falling ill, begged it of me as a friend, to read a few lectures for him during his indisposition, that his students in anatomy might feel no loss in his absence."

At that moment, casting his eye into the church-yard, for the vicarage-house stood in one corner of it, he saw some with spades and pickaxes come into it, and, making a stand close by a handsome tombstone, despatched one, who came out to be the clerk of the parish, to the parsonage-house. Old Comical, who always had his wits about him, suspected the truth, that the story had got into the wind, and folks were come to open the grave. The clerk now came in and told the parson that he was come by the squire's or-

ders to get permission to break open Dr. Crambelly's tomb, as a report prevailed that the body had been stolen, and the squire being a near relation, begged the grave might be examined immediately both to satisfy himself and the neighbourhood.

The words were hardly spoken before the squire himself came in, and swore terribly to what he would do if the author of the lie, should it so fall out, could be come at. The parson put Old Comical's letter into the squire's hand, who read it and raved like a madman. Others now flocked to the parson's house, and there were as many as a church could hold in five minutes, aye, and there was a great noise; but Old Comical's voice drowned all the rest, who exclaimed, that the grave had best be examined to satisfy the people.

The church-yard by this time was as full as if it were the last Sunday on earth, and Old Comical sallied forth amongst the rest to examine Dr. Crambelly's grave: and to work they fell, some with pickaxes, and some with spades, and soon routed the poor doctor out of his sepulchre. It hath been wisely observed that when people's attention is deeply engaged in any matter, a man may steal any thing. Old Comical was aware of this, and stole a march; and in good time, for the enraged squire unkenneled a pack with the constable in place of huntsman, and they beat seven parishes to find Old Comical, but all in vain: for he went directly to the hedge where he had left his wallet, and getting into a high road mounted the first stage-coach, and scoured away like dust before the wind.

“How far are you going?” quoth the coachman.
“As far as you can drive me,” quoth Old Comical:

and sometimes singing, sometimes telling stories, and sometimes making faces, Old Comical raised a monstrous uproar upon the roof of the coach.

Coming to the inn at night whereat the coach put up, Old Comical ordered a supper and a bed, and giving directions for a hot pot of rambooze, "Landlord," said he, "pay the coachman his fare, and give the poor fellow half-a-crown for himself;" whereupon he unbuttoned his coat, and showed his gold laced waistcoat, which had already done great execution.

It was concluded that a man who had so much gold upon his clothes must needs have a great deal more in his pocket, which, like redundancy of humours, when there are more than the body can conceal, break out upon the surface: so the landlord went into the kitchen, talked about Old Comical's gold, and paid the coachman his fare, and rattling down a half-crown piece upon the dresser,

"You see what noble guests I entertain, coachman," quoth the landlord, "that's for yourself!"

At this inn, which was a very good one, Old Comical staid a fortnight, ate, drank, and slept like a man in good health; and attracted so many by his oddities, that the landlord would have been glad to have hung Old Comical up for his sign, for he never drew so much liquor in his life; but he soon found out that hanging was too good for him, for he took a walk one day before he paid his bill.

Old Comical now lay under manifold obligations to gentlemen in sundry parts of Great Britain, and began to be overwhelmed with gratitude for so many favours and kindnesses, but, however it fell out, he was in no great hurry to return to any to thank them for their

The History of Mr. John Decastro

good things. When he left his brother's house in Northamptonshire his drift lay southward, and he had in the course of about a year and a half very much amused almost all the inhabitants of the south and southwestern parts of the island. He began now to be much talked of, and much sought after, in the county of Dorset especially, where his fame had risen like the sun upon the earth. Like that great luminary, Old Comical had drawn a great deal out of it without paying anything for it: but here the comparison breaks, for instead of holding his own, and shining on with undiminished brightness, Old Comical began to grow tarnished, and had lost three parts out of four of the gold lace from his waistcoat, and as much respect along with it; so that the very garment that used to carry him with such honours into an inn, could scarcely, in such its decayed state, get him a piece of a bench at an alehouse. In a little time he grew as ragged as any beggar, and, if to be a less rogue is to be more honest, he was not now so great a rogue as when he wore better clothes, so rags in some sort brought honesty along with them, for there never was a great rogue without a fine coat upon his back.

He now made the best of his way out of the south, and the more ragged he grew the more he was disguised, for it was a man in a gold laced waistcoat that robbed the people, and rags had no concern in the matter. We must now make the best of our way with him to Oaken Grove and leave him to recite at some future time many a piece of fun, and many a knavish trick, which we have not leisure at present to enumerate, and which will come in, perhaps, with more dignity in another place.

The History of Mr. John Decastro

As people in decay run the farthest from those places wherein they shone the most in their better days, so Old Comical ran out of the south directly into the north, and after begging, ballad-singing, and stealing by turns he at length came to the ferry at Oaken Grove: and dangling the horn in his hands which hung on the post, not knowing well what to make of it, put it to his mouth at last, and blew it with all his might. The ferryman unchained his boat at the accustomed signal, and when he arrived at the opposite shore, called Old Comical an impudent scoundrel, and asked who was to wait on him? Old Comical humbly begged pardon, and a penny, of the ferryman, and said, had he known the uses of the horn, he had sooner heard the devil blow it than he. The ferryman, struck with the oddity of Old Comical, gave him a penny, and forgave him his trouble, and Old Comical offering some ballads to sale the ferryman bought sixpennyworth of Old Comical's poetry. Upon which, "Is there any charity," quoth he, "to be found on the other side of the water?" The ferryman, who loved fun and drollery, upon this took Old Comical into his boat and landed him on the opposite shore; telling him that nobody lived in the old castle, but he would perhaps get a platter of broken meat at Mr. Decastro's, describing a farm-house situated on the left hand of it. Upon hearing the name of Decastro, Old Comical called to mind his old friend and fellow-student at the University in Germany, but not much expecting to find him there, he mounted his stool at the door, and began to sing.

Old Crab, who was then at dinner with his wife in his little parlour, hearing Old Comical's voice, turned

The History of Mr. John Decastro

his head, for he sat with his back to the window, and seeing a beggar upon a stool, began to scold his wife for encouraging a pack of ragged rascals at the farm.

“I should be very sorry,” quoth she, “to do any thing to displease you,” when a trill from Old Comical threw her into convulsions.

It was quite impossible to hear Old Comical sing two verses without laughing, and though Old Crab held it out much longer than his wife, as soon as Old Comical came to a fine shake, Old Crab burst out into a loud peal; and Old Comical, who saw how matters were, followed him up with another quaver, when Old Crab was fain to roar out, “This is a pleasant scoundrel!”

“Come,” said Mrs. B. Decastro, “I think he deserves some broken victuals,” and knowing the usual cast of Old Crab’s countenance when he would assent to a thing, she poured some broken victuals and sixpence, by way of sauce to them, into Old Comical’s wallet; whereupon poor Old Comical, who had not eat a morsel that day, sat down upon a stone at the door, and it did Old Crab’s heart good, and his wife’s too, to see how heartily he ate his breakfast. Old Crab was now going forth to his business on his farm, when staring at Old Comical as he sat at meat, knew his face in an instant, for it was not very possible for any who had once seen Old Comical’s countenance ever to forget it. Old Comical as soon discovered the face of his old fellow-student. Each stared at the other like a post, and for a very good reason because a post has no eyes.

“What, Mathers!” quoth Old Crab, “where the plague dost thou come from?”

“Hold hard,” quoth Old Comical, “and I’ll tell you.”

He then gave a brief account of himself, and his

The History of Mr. John Decastro

wretched situation, which did not fail to make an impression upon such a heart as Old Crab's, who took Old Comical by the collar and hauled him into his house in such a rough manner that if it had happened a little more to the southward Old Comical would not have been much at a loss to guess at some reason for it. As soon as Old Crab had brought him into a little chamber he showed him some old clothes, and bade him dress himself as well as he could, out of the best he could find, and stay till he returned in the evening. When Old Crab came home at night, he found Old Comical fast asleep by his kitchen fire, with his head upon his stool and a great volume of ballads for his pillow. It now only remains to be said in this place, that ever since that day Old Comical has lived with Old Crab, who, after a due course of instruction, made him his bailiff, and a bailiff of greater honesty and integrity never existed than Old Comical, as what remains to be said of him will show.

CHAPTER XI

Mr. and Mrs. Decastro's Folly, and a Masquerade.

WHAT! no love yet? I haven't patience! ten long chapters and not so much as one tender kiss! a kiss! there has not been so much as the breath squeezed out of a woman's body. Fair reader, what can we do for you? Julia and Genevieve are really too young to be kissed yet, and Lady Charlotte Orby, the third pretty woman hinted at a few pages since, will not come into our history for some time, and she is only fourteen years old at this moment, and would scarce know what to do with a kiss if she got one—all we can promise is that we will get over three or four years as fast as our history will permit us, and then you shall read with pleasure how "George caught Julia round her waist and kissed her;" or, "Acerbus squeezed Genevieve till she hiccup'd;" or, "Harry hugged Charlotte till her eyes watered," and every page shall be all on fire with love: but just at present, fair reader, little Cupid has nothing to shoot at, so he may lie by and get his arrows sharpened at the grindstone and steal a new bow.

But, nota bene, pretty maid, if you happen to have a lover of your own, a plain sensible honest man, not as handsome as Apollo, not as ugly as Thersites, not so bright a wit as Aristophanes, nor quite such a heavy log as Mævius, not so smart a beau as the son of Clinias, nor such a sloven as Poodapoop the Hottentot,

The History of Mr. John Decastro

but a good household sort of a gentleman, one, if you know how to choose, that will make you a good husband; what if we should put your mouth out of taste for him, when we bring in such sweetmeats as George Grove, Acerbus Decastro, or Harry Lamsbroke, who will touch your palate with every thing that is exquisite in human nature? Now as a full and true account will be given of these three fine fellows, as it becometh honest and faithful historians to do, we will promise you, dear lady, when any of these dangerous folks are like to come upon the stage, to give you due and prudent notice thereof in the titles to the chapters, to put you upon your guard, when you may either read, or skip, the said chapters, as you may see fit, lest one of these young rascals should pop upon you on a sudden at some odd corner, and do you any mischief.

What in the world could ever bring people to imagine that Mr. and Mrs. Decastro had retired into the north and kept a pork and butter shop in a little village in Cumberland? But this was the only story that was believed after fifty others had been told and disregarded: it was said with confidence, propagated with diligence, and believed with assurance from the centre to the circumference of Mr. Decastro's circle of acquaintance. The following letter from the Earl of Budemere to Old Crab will throw more light upon this matter.

TO THE REV. BARTHOLOMEW DECASTRO.

MY DEAR SIR AND BROTHER: I am not at all afraid of being thought to flatter you when I say, that if there is such a thing as an honest man in England, you are one; for to flatter a man is, as I take it, to tell a lie in

The History of Mr. John Decastro

his praise, but I beg leave to appeal to your conscience for the truth of what I say, and, if that comes over, I shall speak boldly, even if your praise lie in my way to speaking the truth: no soul on earth ever wanted the help of an honest man more than I do, and one, like you, who knows business.

I have been so much plundered of late years by stewards, bailiffs, head fellows, and other cormorants of the like feather, that I am concerned to say my affairs are sick to death of them, and if some medicine is not speedily brought to the malady, I must either turn steward, and plunder others, or commence shop-keeper, and score against the world in my turn, as soon as my own score is paid; which, I am sorry to tell you in confidence, will I fear be no easy matter: but I have no head for business, nor ever had, and when I talk to my steward, the first thing he does is to puzzle me, as if he knew the readiest way to rid his hands of me, for I always send him away when I do not understand him. I sent for him this morning to audit an account of some timber, which I cut down to beautify the western side of my park, and admit a fine prospect—but in truth to pay a bill—he brought me the lengths and girths of the trees by my order—a hint I took from you—the fellow had the cunning to put me upon working the sum of one of the sticks, just as if he knew my ignorance, and I sent him about his business, telling him, that he was paid to save me that trouble. You see, my dear brother, how I may be cheated here, and know nothing about the matter, and thus it is in many other things, for want of a competent knowledge of business. Enclosed I have sent you the account of this timber, which is set down at ten thousand pounds worth, with the girths and lengths of all the trees; you will much oblige me by looking it over for me. To come at once to the point—my affairs are embroiled, and I very much want your help; I am not so crippled as poor Decastro, but am a very lame dog notwithstanding: my late election played the devil with me, a

man had better have set upon a three-legged stool all his days, than bought his seat in a certain great house at the price it cost me.

We are coming this summer to visit the lakes, and see other curiosities in your part of the world; Sir Harry and Lady St. Clair, and Mrs. Perrimont, will be of our party, pray get us some apartments in the next village to you for a few days, while I consult you upon my matters. My situation is unknown to the world, and I would keep it so; for none, except a few men of your turn, pay any respect to a person in distress. My late accession to new honours may have added a little to my name, but it has taken a great deal from my pocket; an addition to my title has added to my expenses, indeed, but not to my income. It is very much my wish, my dear brother, to make a friend of you, but I am sorry to see that you take pains to avoid me: the man that is the most wanted in a house like mine is sure to be the greatest stranger in it. I am my-lorded, and my-lorded, and my-lorded over by a pack of cheats, sycophants, parasites and plunderers, many of whom cannot even rob me without being paid for their trouble. I will not scruple to say, that in my present situation I am really an object of your charity, and beg of you, not only by our relationship, but in the name of pity and compassion, that you would look into my affairs and tell me what ground I have left to stand upon.

Colonel Barret, who is come to be with us for a few days, has just told us a sad story of poor Decastro, and given but too good authority for the truth of it: the substance of which is, that when all his debts were paid he had nothing left to live upon, that you, out of charity, and at your own expense, have set him up in a little shop in some village near you, and that he and his wife get their bread by retailing snuff, tobacco, pork, and butter to the neighbourhood. Many stories have been told, but as none have come upon such good evidence as the above, we have opened a subscription

The History of Mr. John Decastro

for him, and names are already put to the amount of three thousand pounds, which may be sunk in an annuity sufficient to supersede the necessity of our poor brother's keeping a dirty shop. Present our kind remembrances to him and his lady, and tell him we will call and ask him how he does when we come into your neighbourhood.

OLD CRAB'S ANSWER TO THE EARL OF BUDEMERE'S LETTER.

KINSMAN: I have long expected to see you in the brambles, and your coat is like to get pretty well scratched, if you come off with a bit of cloth upon your back, as appears by your own story. Your timber is ill sold and cast up two thousand pounds too little into the bargain, taking your steward's own account of it—how it hath been measured is another matter—but I have had trouble enough with John's affairs—will the devil never leave the family? What the plague do you and your gang come staring here after? I have sent your letter to John, he may look for lodgings, I shall not trouble myself about such an idle crew; yawning and gaping about the country, as if ye had more money than a pack of fools knew what to do with.

If you have got any thing to say to me, why don't you get into a stage-coach and come by yourself? I told you two years ago, when I met you in Bond-street, those two scoundrels, your stewards, were playing the devil with you, one within doors and the other without; but you were such an ass and a fool as to take no heed to what I said.—Why didn't you let that election alone? What the devil could you have to do in it that had no money to squander away? Must you ruin yourself to bring such precious talents as yours, forsooth, to the service of the nation? Who could have put it into your stupid brains, that you, who can't take care of your own matters, should be a fit person to take care of the public? Why the plague did not you set mat-

ters to rights in your own house before you came to set matters to rights in the House of Commons? What a sum this business cost you to get into it, when, if you had had a little patience, you might have got into the other house for nothing! Were you in such a hurry to get into Parliament to teach folks economy? To show people how to make things go the farthest by going the nearest way? A pretty maggot you were like to make in the cheese, if we set ourselves, with a vengeance, to eat one another out of house and home! You are a worse profligate than John; he never spent seventy thousand pounds at a cast in his life—your election cost you that, or they lied that told me the story.

I avoid you! can you blame a man for getting out of the way of a nuisance? a man that lives the life that you live is worse than a nuisance. I don't fall out with you because you are "MY LORD;" a man may be a good man under any name—I look not to the name, but to the man—the greater a man's name is the better if he be a good man, for great folks are the most stared at, are seen by the most people, and influence more by their example. A great man is a great torrent that sweeps much along with him, and if he be running on to destruction he takes half a world on his way to it. Folks stick to a great man like vermin, and if he falls, down comes he and all his vermin together. If a little man makes a false step it concerns few but himself; but when a great man stumbles, ten thousand must needs stumble with him to be in the fashion. A great man is the sun of a system; let him remember that it is his business to shine and to enlighten those beneath him. But it is of no use to talk to such a one as you, you will take your own way if you break your neck in it, and, if you must needs do mischief, the sooner the better.

What's become of your wife's fortune? is it all spent? And, because my father thought it no easy matter to give you as much money as you deserved, you must

The History of Mr. John Decastro

e'en have half poor Peg's cash; is that all spent too? You turn out a pretty fellow to be trusted, and my father must quarrel with me for talking about securities when a man of so much trust and honour was coming into our family. What is become of the forty and five thousand pounds which you carried out of our house? Is there enough left to buy your wife a pair of shoes? is there enough left to buy yourself a halter? I know to an hour when the last five thousand pounds were sold out of the stocks to pay that blood hound St. Clair a Newmarket bet. I avoid you! who began? I would have put a guard upon Jane's money, my father asked me if I took you for a scoundrel? He cursed, and you swore, and would as soon come near the devil as look at me for ten years together. You stirred the fire between my father and me, it might have gone out after a hasty flash, and got me disinherited. How came I to find this out? I found the whole correspondence between you and my father amongst John's papers. This was revenge enough, or you must have had a savage's appetite for it. But it is no matter. You had at least the credit to think it were impossible I should find this out; but now it seems you have a mind to put me in a way to return an obligation: you have got hold of the wrong man for that. Send your stewards to me and I will see what can best be done for you.

Yours,

BARTHOLOMEW DECASTRO.

*Oaken-Grove Farm,
May 30th.*

In answer to this came a letter of confession, and, to do Lord Budemere justice, of sorrow too, for this malicious act. It is very odd that a man should look like a fool when he is detected in doing a wrong thing: but the next time Old Crab and Lord Budemere met one another the latter gentleman certainly looked very silly:

The History of Mr. John Decastro

but that his lordship may not look silly in print also, we will not insert his letter: but to express one's sorrow, and make what amends one can for a fault, is the only way to put off a silly face and put on a wise one. *Sed de his hactenus.**

But the pork and butter shop raised a loud laugh at the castle, and it might have been as well if matters had ended there, but Mr. and Mrs. Decastro had a mind to make themselves a little more merriment upon it while their hand was in, though there was more malice mixed with their merriment than made for their credit. How far provocation may go towards an excuse for them, the reader will judge, to whom we submit the following letter.

TO MRS. DECASTRO.

MY DEAR SISTER: I have written two letters to you, one of which I sent to Paris, and the other to Rome, at both which places you have been said to be, but having received no answer to either, I am willing to try once more to find you by sending a letter to my brother for you, in whose neighbourhood we have been told you are, and where we rather think you are, because my lord mentioned the thing in a letter to my brother Bat, and, though he does not say that you are, he certainly does not deny it in his answer to my lord, which we think he certainly would have done had the thing not been really so, very well knowing his way in such matters, for he not only will not deceive one himself, but will not let another deceive one if he can help it.

I therefore set down Colonel Barret's intelligence as true, who has got news of you on his way from Scotland, but the account he brings has given us the greatest mortification: indeed I was so vexed when I heard

* A Latin phrase, meaning "but enough of this."—*Editor's Note.*

The History of Mr. John Decastro

it that I was forced to leave the room, and I did but just save my distance, for the moment I got out at the door I burst into tears: and this as much at the malicious satisfaction, which some people who were with us were not even at the pains to conceal in our presence, amongst whom Mrs. Perrimont, and Sir Harry and Lady St. Clair were the very devils of them all: yes, my dear sister, they actually seemed glad that you and Mr. Decastro were reduced to the necessity of keeping a dirty shop to get bread for yourselves and your children!

When I returned to the room I felt as if I had a mad dog in my throat the first time I spoke to either of them. I was so enraged at their conduct, that I spoke to my lord about it, but he said it must not be noticed, for he owed Sir Harry St. Clair a great deal of money: and a cursed king of clubs coming up at a rubber at whist laid me under the hatches to Madam Perrimont for three hundred guineas: so my lord and I were e'en forced to eat our toads and be silent, and be more than civil to people we could be glad to see hanged.

Sir Harry and Lady St. Clair, you know, are both of them great mimics, and they must needs give us a specimen of their talents at your expense; Sir Harry tied his handkerchief round him to serve for an apron, a table was made to stand for a counter, and Lady St. Clair came to buy butter, and Mrs. Perrimont was the first to countenance their scandalous buffooneries with her malicious laugh; they met with too much support from the rest who were present, but there was a pre-eminence of malice in her applause—I could have spit in her face!

O how I wished at that moment that the old castle in the north were restored to its ancient grandeur, and that you were shining in it upon twenty thousand a year! There is a time, as good luck will have it, when people grow tired of playing the fool; as soon as this farce was over, as if to make amends for all their mal-

The History of Mr. John Decastro

ice, Sir Harry and Lady St. Clair put about a subscription for you, and, though not one penny was collected, there were twenty names subscribed in a very charitable way, for there were at least as many people in the room, and none to a less sum than ten guineas. This subscription has since been greatly extended, and, *if we can get the money*, it will purchase an annuity sufficient to keep you out of a filthy shop.

I must now tell you that my lord and I, Sir Harry and Lady St. Clair, and Mrs. Perrimont have made a party to visit the Lakes this summer, when we mean to take you in our way, as my lord has some business with my brother Bat.—But after all, this letter may never find you; for why may not Colonel Barret's intelligence be false as well as any other story we have heard told of you? These my doubts make this letter shorter than it would have been if I were sure it would come to you.—My love to my brother.

Your very affectionate

SISTER JANE.

What a sad thing it is that folks should ever grow tired of laughing! But it comes to be dangerous if held on too long, forasmuch as it brings pains and stitches in the back and sides, and some have gone so far as to burst themselves, which is no laughing matter. As soon as Mr. and Mrs. Decastro got breath, for they laughed at this letter as long as they had any; they arose from a sofa, on which they had thrown themselves to laugh more at their ease, and devised the following plot to bring these gay folks to the castle. Now the pork and butter shop was not to be given up by any means, and, to give them their due, they certainly made the best of it, though a little at the expense of truth, and that was something strange, for it was the first time that a shop and a lie ever came to-

The History of Mr. John Decastro

gether since the creation of the world. Mrs. Decastro stuck to Sir Harry and Lady St. Clair till her tongue drew blisters upon their malicious mockeries, and it might not be the first time they deserved to be hanged for their pains; but at all events one should not tell a lie to bring even a murderer to the gallows, though it might be the means, and the only means too, to bring him there, aye, though the letting him loose would be the cutting of ten more throats one after another.—Mr. Decastro stuck a little at the following answer written by Mrs. Decastro to her sister's letter.

MY DEAR SISTER: My poor husband and I beg to return our best thanks for your kind letter, and more especially for that part of it where it is said that a subscription has been put about for us—pray thank all our kind friends in our names: money indeed is a very welcome thing to poor folks in distress—it will indeed be a great happiness to be set upon an independent foot for the remainder of our lives: we owe what little matters we enjoy to the provision and goodness of your brother Bat, and indeed the little bit of bread which we eat he puts into our mouths—he has done great things for us to set us clear of all the world, and bring us into a way to get a maintenance if we will but be careful and diligent in our business. It will give us great pleasure to see our kind friends and benefactors, and thank them in person for their charitable donations: Colonel Barret told you the truth, your brother Bat has put us into a house at no great distance from his own, and keeps us under his eye and directions: our distresses have so mortified our pride that we shall not run away *for shame* if you condescend to call at our shop.

Your brother begs me to say that he has got some rooms for you and your party at the house of a great man in this neighbourhood, who will not be put to any

The History of Mr. John Decastro

inconvenience, his place being very large: so far from it that, knowing you and Lord Budemere, he will be much gratified, he says, in having an opportunity to return some civilities, which he somewhere received from his lordship. A man will be sent to be your guide from Carlisle to this place. Will you allow me to take the liberty of subscribing myself

Your ladyship's very affectionate sister,

and very thankful and extremely

obliged humble servant,

M. DECASTRO.

Now there were a great many pro's and con's passed between Mr. and Mrs. Decastro upon this letter, and he took some pains to flatter his wife into a mind to burn it, but it was more than he could do, so the letter was sealed and sent. Mrs. Decastro talked a great deal, which is a very unusual thing for a lady to do, about inviting these fine folks to the castle in order to return good for evil. Mr. Decastro must needs have it that there would be revenge in it, that the grandeur of the place would make it a house of correction, and would give a great deal of pain to minds full of envy and malice worse than if they came into Bridewell and got well whipped. This did but give furtherance to his wife's argument that to correct and punish bad people was an act of charity to themselves, as well as to others:—upon this Mrs. Decastro won the day and wore the breeches.

Now Mrs. Decastro was mighty busy in preparing for her company, and drew out her whole stock of grandeur for the occasion. Everything that could shine was brought forward, and she certainly had shining stuff enough about her to content a moderate person. Now the day came, notwithstanding it was fixed, which

looks a little like a contradiction in terms, but it is not for all that, when Old Comical was despatched to Carlisle as the guide aforesaid, and a very fit person, some may think, to come into this farce, as the guide aforesaid, to be ready at the time named by Lord Budemere in his answer to Old Crab's letter: thus far by way of protasis to the matter, that is to say, the forelaying of the ground: the epitasis thereof, that is to say the bustle, comes next.

Now there were many muscles set in motion, and a great deal of straining in the castle, not only to get every thing ready, but to get it ready in the best possible manner, forasmuch as Mrs. Decastro had a mind to let folks see that her husband fell, like the sun, to rise and shine again, and a very dazzling piece of work she made of it. The grandest service of plate was brought out, the choicest wines, and every nicety which art could invent or money could buy was procured for the table, and so malicious was Mrs. Decastro that she ordered new liveries for all the servants, blue with gold epaulets, and shoulder knots, and the devil knows what! and who should know if the devil did not, who had so great a hand in this matter?

Now as soon as the housekeeper and butler had received and executed their orders, and Mrs. Decastro had looked over all to see that nothing might miss fire, she strutted through her stately apartments and eyed all her grandeur over, and felt as spiteful as old Nic.

“A pork and butter shop, indeed! dealers in snuff and tobacco! They shall have money's worth if they come to our shop, I'll warrant them!” would she say, sometimes casting her eyes on the silk furniture, sometimes on the fine old family pictures, and sometimes on

the magnificent painted ceilings: her heart leaped in her bosom at the thought of such exquisite revenge. Now people that have got a great deal of money can do any thing but put it to its right use. Mr. Decastro, (how could he be so silly?)—Mr. Decastro had given orders that a little building should be erected at the park gates, in the form of a little shop, over the door of which was painted in capital letters, JOHN DECASTRO, DEALER IN SNUFF AND TOBACCO. N. B. PORK AND BUTTER BY RETAIL. When this farce was acted Old Crab was confined to his bed with a fever.

Now the day was come, as we said before, and say again, to put the reader in mind of it. Lord Budemere and Sir Harry St. Clair's carriages drove to the ferry and Old Comical put the horn to his mouth and blew a loud blast to call the ferryman. After long sitting folks are as glad to stand, as after long standing they are glad to sit, which is so far from being a shallow observation that it is a very deep one, for it comes from the bottom. Our good people in the carriages had sat till they were tired of their cushions, though softer could not be put underneath a man, and they all got out to rest themselves—and the ladies got out for a certain other reason; now, fair reader, what makes you in such a fuss? there is nothing the matter; the certain thing that made the ladies get out of their carriages was, that if the horses had a mind to dash out of the ferry-boat into the water, they had no mind to go along with them, that's all: adzoooks! some folks have such ticklish imaginations, the ladies especially, they are always thinking of things which it is not fit to eat.

But we are losing time and talking nonsense—talk-

The History of Mr. John Decastro

ing nonsense! what pleases better? and as for losing time it is better lost than found, for what hangs so heavy upon people's hands? But we shall never get these fine folks into the ferry-boat—now they are all in—one admires the fineness of the day, another the beauties of the woods, another the clearness of the water, another the lofty towers of the old castle lifting their magnificent heads over the old oaks on the hill, another—but hold a moment, how many are there of them? Lord Budemere one, Lady Budemere two, Sir Harry St. Clair three, Lady St. Clair four—and Mrs. Perrimont five; we may go on yet safely—another wonders whose fine place the castle is? Now the moral to this prudent stop by the way is this, viz. every one should count his money before he runs into expenses.

If we had run on and set six people to making observations when there were only five in the boat, we had as good gone to the devil at once, for we certainly should have been sent there. But Old Comical was ready upon the wonder just expressed as to whose fine place the castle might be; forasmuch as Mr. and Mrs. Decastro, merry souls, had tainted him with their fun, inoculated him with their humour, “that noble old pile belongs to one Mr. Decastro,” quoth he.

“One Mr. Decastro!” said Lord Budemere; “what Mr. Decastro?”

“What Mr. Decastro!” quoth Old Comical; “why, my lord, to define the man, that is to say to give his species and his difference, it is Mr. Decastro, a man with a long chin and a nose like the witch of Endor's upon a bit of gingerbread.”

These words called the attention of the party upon

Old Comical, who had rid behind the carriages amongst the servants not much regarded, only giving the word of command now and then to the drivers—"wheel to the right!" or, "wheel to the left!" as need were. Now in the face of Old Comical, not easily forgotten, Lady St. Clair recognised an old acquaintance, and, tossing her veil over her head, asked him if he did not recollect her? Old Comical, who had some reasons to be a little shy of old acquaintance, gave a shrug, as a man does who drops his eye upon a snake, for he knew her in a moment.

"Don't you know me, sir?" said her ladyship.

"Yes, my lady," quoth Old Comical, "but not until your ladyship pulled up the little petticoat that hung down over your ladyship's face."

"We met once in Northamptonshire?" said she.

"Face to face, my lady, face to face: I used to tell lies once, but I have left off that and stealing too, two dogs that run in couples, my lady—two dogs—"

"But, pray sir," said she, "what is become of your fine gold laced waistcoat?"

"Left that off too, my lady," quoth Old Comical, "or, if your ladyship pleases, it left me off; it dropped off my back somewhere between Salisbury and Andover, my lady, and how far it travelled before it left that road it is taking too much upon me to say."

"Are not you ashamed to come to any body's house and tell so many lies as you did at my father's?" said she.

"Yes, my lady," quoth Old Comical; "I am ashamed now, but I was not then; my blushes don't fly in my face in a moment, my lady, like some people's blushes, my blushes are a long while a-coming; for instance, my

The History of Mr. John Decastro

lady, if I did a naughty thing now, I should not blush until this time two years."

"This is a devilish odd fellow," said Sir Harry St. Clair.

"You would have better reasons to think so, my dear," said her ladyship, "if you knew as much of him as I do."

Upon which she told the story of Old Comical's visit at her father's house, where he lay at bed and board for a week, sang his songs, cracked his jokes, and sent the master of the house a hundred miles upon a wild goose chase after some dying relation.

"You see what comes of these things," said her ladyship; "a man that does wrong will some day look like a fool."

"A man had best always look like a fool," quoth Old Comical, "and then he need not be afraid of being put out of countenance, my lady."

"Don't you think you deserve to be hanged," said she, "for robbing the tailor and shoemaker at Northampton?"

"I have paid both out of my savings, my lady. Stealing," quoth Old Comical, "is but a sort of running in debt after all; if a thief takes a thing, he does but owe another for it, who is sure never to get paid if he hangs a man: this comes of hanging folks. I never could hold with your capital punishments: a halter gives a man no chance; it saves money, indeed, for if a rogue were left alive, he might grow to be honest and make restitution, but neither amendment, repentance, nor restitution come of a man after he is throttled: this is a great mistake in the laws. Send a poor fellow to jail to be mended like a pair of breeches with

The History of Mr. John Decastro

a fault in the tail to their architect—there I hold with you, a stitch in time saves nine. But that Christians should ever be so hardhearted, or legislators such fools, as to take away from a man what they cannot give, because he hath taken from another what he might live to return, gives me a fit of the colic whenever I think of it, my lady.”

“You are a droll hand,” said Lord Budemere; “pray, sir, what is your name?”

“Why, my lord, folks call me Old Comical, but my name is John Mathers of Cock-a-doodle in Northamptonshire.”

“What!” said lady St. Clair, “do you pretend to be related to Mr. Mathers of Northamptonshire?”

“I am younger brother to that very gentleman, my lady, worse luck,—he came first and took all, and left me to smell at the empty cupboards.”

“You have left off telling lies, you say,” said her ladyship.

“I will never tell another as long as I live, my lady, if the devil don’t come slap upon me at a short turning—he jumps upon a man like a cat, sometimes, that is the worst of him.”

“Come,” said her ladyship, “I may be of some service to you; Mr. Mathers has advertised for a lost brother, who, if he can be found, may hear of something very much to his advantage:” upon which lady St. Clair put her hand into her carriage and gave Old Comical the *Morning Post* which contained the advertisement.

At that moment the boat came ashore. Old Comical put the news into his pocket, not that he wanted curiosity, but time to read the paper, and remounted his

The History of Mr. John Decastro

horse: so away they all went, Old Comical galloping first, upon full speed, to the park gates. Now the gates being shut, they stopped thereat, as it was very natural for them to do, when two iron gates, fifteen feet high, stood bolted just before the horses' noses: some may not stick to say this was no good reason for their standing still, and, the hurry they were in considered, find us guilty of great improbabilities, and add moreover, that when a coach and four goes at full speed, no stone wall, much less iron gates, were ever known to stop them: they stopped at the park gates as we were a-saying, however, not because the said gates were shut, perhaps, but because Lord Budemere caught sight of the pork and butter shop which was put there on purpose.

"Here is poor Decastro's shop," exclaimed his lordship, "let us all get out and call on him."

At that moment there was a loud laugh heard in Sir Harry's carriage which came behind, for he and her ladyship, having eyes in their heads as well as Lord Budemere, used them to a like purpose and saw the shop and the name above the door as soon as he did. Now Mr. and Mrs. Decastro were quite prepared for their customers, attired like two petty shopkeepers, and standing in the midst of their pork and butter all ready laid out for sale. Mr. Decastro had his knife between his teeth when the Earl and Countess of Budemere entered his shop; round his waist he wore a brown Holland apron, upon his person a blue butcher's jacket adorned with white sleeves all covered with blood and grease, as if he had just stuck or cut out a pig.

As soon as the whole party had a full view of him, he retired into a little room as if ashamed to be seen,

and left Mrs. Decastro to make an end of the farce: she was very dirty and very ragged—held a bloody cloth in one hand, a loin of pork by the tail in the other, stood and stared like one confounded, and said not a word. On her head she had a cap with long ears to it that covered a good deal of her face, but so begrimed with dirt and grease, as well as her face, which had a cloud of snuff upon it, that her sister could scarce recollect her, but the moment she did she burst into tears, and was forced to go back into her carriage. She shed tears for the whole company, however, for there was no crying amongst the rest, they were too much in a laughing humour for that. Lord Budemere, it must be said to his honour, looked very grave: Mrs. Decastro had much ado to keep up the comedy, when Lady St. Clair, eyeing her through her glass, started back, exclaiming, “Good heaven, this is Mrs. Decastro!”

“When folks fall into misfortune, my lady,” said Mrs. Decastro, “and grow poor who once were rich, it is no easy matter to be known by their old friends: there was a time, (continued she, making an humble courtesy,) when I could appear on a foot with your ladyship, who did me the honour to visit at my house amongst others of like rank and fashion; but these things will soon sink into oblivion at the sight of a poor shopkeeper.”

Lady St. Clair, with a haughty toss, said, “she did not recollect her at first,” and taking a crimson and gold purse out of her pocket (the ladies wore pockets at that day) containing ten guineas, (a guinea was a gold coin current in England at that time) flung it with an elegant air into Mrs. Decastro’s ragged apron,

The History of Mr. John Decastro

held up to receive her ladyship's charity; but the purse, in scorn, perhaps, made its way through a great hole in it, and fell into a basket of griskins; upon which Lady St. Clair turned round to Sir Harry, and asked the baronet with a loud laugh, if he did not think the woman had brought her pigs to a good market?

Sir Harry, who could laugh the loudest where another would shed tears, took up the basket of pork, and, with much politeness, picked the purse out of the pig-meat and presented it to Mrs. Decastro: upon this, too proud to be outdone by his lady in almsdeeds, the baronet drew out his note-case, and, opening a twenty pound bank bill so that all might see the full value of it, drew it through the air between his finger and thumb like a flag, and walking towards the counter, behind which Mrs. Decastro had retired with her purse to put the money into the till, laid it at its full length upon the shop-board; upon which Mrs. Decastro took the bank note, looked at its value, made the baronet a courtesy, and humbly thanked him. Having poured the gold out of the purse, she came and returned it to lady St. Clair, who, shocked at the sight of it after it had defiled itself amongst the pork griskins, flung it from her with indignation, and called Mrs. Decastro a nasty woman.

Now Lord Budemere, casting an eye of superiority upon the baronet, took out a thirty pound note, and, telling Mrs. Decastro how much pain it gave him that she should come to want such a trifle, put it into her hand with great expression of sorrow in his countenance. Mrs. Perrimont stood by the while, and, holding up her petticoats for fear of getting grease from the dirty floor, bore witness to all that passed. Now,

The History of Mr. John Decastro

as soon as others had gratified their charitable appetites, she came forward lest she should be outdone—pride is a virtue, it makes folks so very charitable—lest she should be outdone in charity she came forward with her ten pound note, and, making Mrs. Decastro an apology for the smallness of her contribution, as being a traveller, and not having much money about her, put on her glove first, and then ventured to put the note into Mrs. Decastro's dirty paws. Now Lady Budemere gave her nothing but her tears, a more valuable present than any she had received from all the rest put together.

CHAPTER XII

How Lord Budemere and his Party were received at the Castle.

MRS. DECASTRO, having repeated her thanks and her courtesies, made an excuse for her husband, who was, she said, too much affected to be seen at that time, but if the party would do him so much honour as to call at their shop the next day, he might summon resolution sufficient to see them: thus far Mrs. Decastro supported her character like an actress of no common merit, but, to make room for the party to get out of the shop, which was very small, she had the ill luck to press her pocket against the counter and set her repeater a-striking in it!

Now this was so uncommon a sound to be expected in such a place that every body present took notice of it. Mrs. Decastro, however,—O that wit were ever so at hand!—instantly said that her husband did a little business in the watch-making way, and she had just been to fetch the lady's watch from the great house. Upon which, Lord Budemere promising to call the next day, they all got into their carriages, and there was a loud laugh heard in Sir Harry's as they drove through the park gates. Being now come into the middle of the park, and into a full view of the superb old castle, Lord Budemere stopped his carriage and calling out to Old Comical, began to question him about it and its owner.

“Why, my lord,” quoth Old Comical, “the woman at the shop would have told you all about it if you had asked her; the castle and the park, and a world besides belong to one 'Squire Decastro; and it is the very house we have been looking for all day; but if your lordship thinks you shall lose your way to it now you see it, I will ride with your lordship up to the gates, and put the building into your lordship's hand.”

“O this is the house we are to be at, is it?” said Lord Budemere; “pray what is the name of this place?”

“Why, didn't I tell your lordship the name of it?”

“No,” said he, “not knowing this to be the place we were coming to, I did not ask for any thing but the owner's name.”

“The name of this place,” quoth Old Comical, “is Oaken Grove.”

Saying which Old Comical took off his hat and wig at the same time, either for more respect to his lordship, or because one stuck fast in the other, and, branching off into a side road, galloped away to Old Crab's farm-house.

Now Lord Budemere and his party galloped over the draw-bridge and under a superb archway into the square, and coming up to the grand entrance were received by four or five servants in splendid liveries at the hall door. They were then shown into a large apartment, which was called the saloon, and the butler came to inform them that Mr. and Mrs. Decastro were in their dressing-rooms, and that the first bell had just been rung for dinner. They were now shown to their apartments, which were some of the best in the castle,

The History of Mr. John Decastro

much wondering, who this Mr. Decastro could be that was the owner of this noble palace.

Curiosity puts folks into the fidgets: Lord Budemere and his party never dressed themselves in such a hurry for dinner in their lives. Who could this Mr. Decastro be? was he some relation? how came he to be so long unknown? how came the world never to have heard of him? had he bought the castle? did he rent it? how the devil came he into it?

“There may be ten Decastros in the world, my dear,” said Lord Budemere to the countess, “and we none the wiser.”

“That is true,” said she, “so far as the ‘may be’ goes—but my poor sister (O that she and my poor brother were living in this place!)—but my poor sister said in her letter, that the owner of this place was known to us—we should have apartments in the house of a person that knew us—not only knew us, but one who had received civilities from us, and would be glad of an opportunity to make us a return.”

“That is very true,” said Lord Budemere, “and makes the thing still more amazing!”

Now, reader, we will clap an ear to the keyhole of Sir Harry’s door, and try what we can pick up on that side—

Sir Harry. What a detestable thing must pride be, when one cannot even see it punished without feeling gratified at its agonies!

Lady St. Clair. The Decastros have but justice; they owed the world a fall; the debt is paid;—to be sorry when bad people are punished, is to be a partaker in their guilt. The punishment of the arrogant, and the humiliation of the proud is a feast for an angel;

for who but a devil can be sorry when justice is done? With what contempt have these Decastros looked down upon the world, what equipages have they kept, what entertainments have they given, what grandeur have they displayed in their houses, in their tables, and their amusements! how many have they invited to insult them with their magnificence; how many have they entertained to make them feel their inferiority! It was a disgrace not to be where all the great world was invited, not to have one's name in the grand catalogue, and be able to talk of Mrs. Decastro's rout, Mrs. Decastro's masquerade, Mrs. Decastro's breakfast, Mrs. Decastro's music—to be shut out of her parties, was to be shut out of heaven! to be admitted was to be admitted into a place of torment: the haughty look, the superior air, the elevated brow, the contemptuous smile, the premeditated neglect, the toss of arrogance and the sneer of pride stung one like hornets, and, what was worse, got at the tenderest part about one too: then look where one would, every object that took the eye brought vexation, as who should say, what can you do when compared to us? We were invited to enjoy the sunshine, but not to try to imitate the sun: we were invited to worship and welcome, but not to aspire to be divinities: we were invited to be shown how very little little things are when put by the side of great ones: their entertainments were so grand that nothing was omitted that could sink us in our own estimation—this was the hand-writing on Mrs. Decastro's stately walls, "Thou art weighed with us in the balance and found wanting."

Sir Harry. I hope Mrs. Decastro's customers will not have that to say of her pork and butter.

The History of Mr. John Decastro

Reader! Mrs. Perrimont is talking very much to herself, put your ear a minute to the crack of her door and hear her soliloquy.

Mrs. Perrimont. Well, for my part, I always hated high noses; there is no harm in hating pride, I suppose, for pride is a great sin, and to hate them that are bad is no mean sign of one's own goodness, for he that hates the devil gives good earnest of not loving what is bad. The Decastros are down at last, and I rejoice to feel so much virtue in myself as to be glad that they are totally ruined! They are dead and buried in a dirty shop, and it is not possible that they can rise again. The mighty mountain is sunk into the earth which stood between the sun and half the world. It is as flat as flat can be, that's the beauty of it! and I could scarce have thought that I had such good principles in me as to feel so gratified at it—so rejoiced—in such raptures! How a lucky hit shows one's virtues!—If these proud devils had not been ruined now, I should never have known half my own excellence. I never loved wicked people, it is true, but I never could have imagined that I hated them so cordially as to be so overjoyed at their downfall as at this moment. They have got a snug shop though, after all, and, I dare say, serve all the neighbourhood with pork steaks and fresh butter: but come, I feel that I have Christian charity in me too, I am glad that they are in a fair way to get their bread; I have a feeling heart. Good heavens! how these people have been hated and worshipped, visited and detested, flattered and admired, even by those who, like me, could have been glad to have cut their throats! The justice of heaven has managed matters better—to have knocked them on the

The History of Mr. John Decastro

head with a couple of thunder-stones, though a thing devoutly to be wished, and a glorious exhibition to all the world, would have been a bungling business to such a visitation as this—they might have been cast into hell and scorched for their arrogance and pride on earth, and none the wiser, none the better for it;—but now they are held up as an example in the very nose and eyes of the world, they are punished in the very presence, to the very forehead of that world which their high and haughty insolence has disgusted and offended! Heaven now holds up their faces for every body to spit into—holds out their noses for every body to pull—their flesh to the spurns and kicks of every body who has a mind to lift up the foot of indignation! for this we thank thee, O —

The bell now rang and cut Mrs. Perrimont off—aye, in the very middle of her thanksgiving.—To proceed with the story: the butler waited at the foot of the grand staircase, and conducted the Earl and Countess, Sir Harry and Lady St. Clair, and Madam Perrimont through the great saloon, which was next the hall, into the library, and then through the little saloon into the crimson drawing-room, so called from its superb furniture which was crimson velvet and gold. The party followed the servant in silence—and the butler might have led them through a horse-pond and they none the wiser, gaping and staring as they walked along at the variety of grand things that shone like the stars on all hands. Two or three footmen arrayed in splendid liveries put them some chairs ready, and left them to shift for themselves.

When any thing very grand, or very new, or very odd, or very comical comes in folks' way, they stare

The History of Mr. John Decastro

first, and then fall to talking; this was just the case with our fine folks here, who soon filled the splendid apartment wherein they were with notes of admiration. Now it came to pass in the very middle of all their wonderings whose this grand place, and whose these grand things could be, that the drawing-room door was opened on a sudden, and Mrs. Decastro walked into it dressed in a very elegant manner! The amazement which her appearance occasioned could not have been greater if she had walked out of a tomb!

Reader! did your head ever run round upon your shoulders like a coach wheel? because if it never did you can have no idea how giddy the apparition of Mrs. Decastro made these good folks; and, what added not a little to the whirlpool in their brains, Mrs. Decastro had but that very moment entered at one door when Mr. Decastro made his bow at another. Lord Budemere rubbed his eyes, Lady Budemere cried Ha! Sir Harry felt for his opera-glass, Lady St. Clair stamped with her foot, and Mrs. Perrimont was turned into a post.

There was a deep silence for two or three minutes, notwithstanding there were no less than four women in the room. A man might have bored a hole with a nail piercer and then taken a hammer and driven a ten-penny nail into the body of any man or woman in Lord Budemere's party, and he or she have felt no more of it than if a spike had been hammered into an apple tree! There was no such thing as flesh and blood in the place, except what Mr. and Mrs. Decastro had about them! who now advanced to shake hands, pay the usual compliments to their company, and restore suspended animation to these

The History of Mr. John Decastro

bewildered creatures, who were almost drowned in astonishment.

The second bell now rang for dinner, a charming piece of music to a man with a good stomach, when the butler came in and said that the dinner was put upon the table; and, taking the lead to open the doors, which is more than many can do for themselves, ushered the company into a noble dining-room that glittered with plate like a silversmith's shop: and a very magnificent apartment it was, lined and skirted to the top with fine old oak, and adorned with a broad cornice of fruit and flowers, curiously wrought in the same wood. On the ceiling was painted the return of the Prodigal Son, designed and executed by the hand of some great master, round the edges of which was cast a deep border of pigs of all sorts, shapes, and sizes, throwing themselves into a variety of frisks, leaps, jumps, sports, attitudes, and gesticulations: furthermore in each of the four corners of the gorgeous roof lay four old sows suckling thirteen pigs apiece, extended at their ease on straws of gold. The furniture was composed of rich blue silk damasked with flowers, and round about the room were disposed, with judicious elegance, a profusion of gold, silver, and costly china ornaments. The windows exhibited a grand sample of fine old painted glass. In the first window was painted a large committee of hogs holding a solemn council of war. In the second were two armies of swine drawn up in battle array. In the third the two armies were in the heat and fury of an engagement; numberless pigs lay stretched out upon the field of battle, and the blood ran in streams all about the window. In the fourth there was a triumphal procession of hogs, in the

The History of Mr. John Decastro

midst of which, mounted on a car of victory, rode an enormous boar eating a great carrot, and the juice running out of both corners of his mouth.

But to return to our party: their eating and drinking may be brought as one proof of their coming to their senses, doing no little justice to Mr. Decastro's costly viands and delicious wines; which were so excellent, and smelled so sweet, that a marble statue of Epicurus ran from its pedestal and sat down to dinner with the rest of the company; a liberty it was never known to take before, though it had stood in Mr. Decastro's dining-room for many years.

Well, much talk passed, and many welcomes and compliments between Mr. and Mrs. Decastro and their guests, without one word, at present, upon the pork-shop. A pleasant glance was now and then exchanged between mine host and mine hostess, but nothing further, forasmuch as they merrily lay by for the cue from their company, who eyed them quite as much as they peeped and watched on their side for their hearts; Old Comical putting in his nose, at times, amongst the servants, who dearly loved a joke, to see how matters went on.

As soon as the dinner was carried away, for when people have filled themselves as full as they can hold, they are content to part with what they cannot eat; as soon as the dinner was carried out, and the worst part of eating is that it quite spoils the appetite, as soon as dinner was carried out, and when a man hath filled his belly to quarrel and knock the servants on the head for taking away what meat may be left upon the bones were ill manners, as soon as dinner was carried out, the wine and dessert set, and the servants all

gone, curiosity began to be very riotous in certain people, the ladies especially, when Mrs. Perrimont, who could hold out no longer, when Mrs. Perrimont, who had sat in a bursting condition all dinner time, when Mrs. Perrimont, who really was in such distress that she fidgetted about on her chair as if the devil was between her and her cushion, when Mrs. Perrimont, staring at Mrs. Decastro, said, that she and the rest of her party had been robbed at the Park gates!

Mr. and Mrs. Decastro kept fast hold of their countenances, and they had great need, for if one muscle had broken loose it had spoiled the jest. “Robbed at the Park gates!” said Mr. Decastro. “Robbed at the Park gates!” said Mrs. Decastro; and both put a great lie into their faces, for they made countenance as if they knew nothing at all about the matter.

Now, as soon as Mrs. Perrimont had broken the shell out came white and yolk and all together—Lord Budemere said he had been robbed of more than all the rest; Sir Harry and Lady St. Clair pushed on after his lordship, and they all cried out upon their losses like—we must owe you a simile, reader, for we cannot, at present, find any noise in nature at all equal to their outcries.

Upon this, videlicet, the great noise—Mr. Decastro held up his hand for a little silence, and begged his noble brother, Lord Budemere, would tell the story for all the rest. Upon which the peer arose in a very graceful manner, and, stretching forth his right hand, which was as much as to say that he would make his words good against any man with his fist, stretching forth his right hand, told the whole story of the pork and butter shop. As soon as the noble lord had told his story, and shut his mouth up, to the truth of which

The History of Mr. John Decastro

every body in his lordship's party bore ample testimony, Mr. Decastro arose in his turn, and said they must all be very much mistaken, for wherever they had met with a shop on the road they certainly had seen no such thing at the park gates.

"What gates do you call those on the brow of the hill," said Sir Harry, "at fifty yards' distance from the ferry?"

"Those are my park gates, certainly," said Mr. Decastro, "but I am sure there is no such thing as any shop there."

"But I will bet you fifty guineas," said Sir Harry in haste, "that there is a shop there, and that pork and butter, snuff and tobacco, are sold in it at this moment!"

"There was a time," said Mr. Decastro, "when I would have taken any bet you dared to offer—but that time is gone by—however, I do assure you, upon my honour, that there is no shop at my park gates, or any house there, except the lodge on the right hand side coming to the castle."

"You mean," said Lord Budemere, "a white stone building with gothic windows painted green?"

"I do," said Mr. Decastro, "I built the same last year at my park gates."

"And will you say," rejoined Sir Harry, "that there is no such thing as a pork and butter shop immediately opposite to this lodge at your park gates?"

"I will not only say it, but pledge my honour that no such exists there," said Mr. Decastro; "surely I ought to know what I have at my park gates!"

Upon which Sir Harry jumped up like a man that had a devil, and swore a great oath that he and all his

party had not only seen the shop, but had all been in it, and been robbed in it too, not more than an hour before dinner: upon this each person named the sums of money which had been taken from them. Mr. Decastro then said that he had taken notice of something very odd in the looks and demeanour of the whole party ever since they had been in the house, and begged to know what wine they had drank with their sandwiches? Upon which Sir Harry called aloud for the devil to take him if he did not go that moment to the park gates, and bring a pound of pork steaks to make his words good; and away he went like a man that had taken a dose of physic.

Now in the worthy baronet's absence every body bore Mr. and Mrs. Decastro down, say what they would, that there certainly was a pork and butter shop at the park gates, and urged the impossibility of so many people being deceived all together. Mr. and Mrs. Decastro insisting upon it that there was no such thing, Lord Budemere begged that the man who was sent to be their guide from Carlisle, might be called in to corroborate their assertions.

At that moment some one knocked at the door with a knuckle, and, at a word, in came Old Comical himself with a letter in his hand for Mr. Decastro: all knew him in a moment, and Lord Budemere, begging silence, for more mouths than one opened upon Old Comical, said, he would be very glad to ask him a question; whereupon Old Comical turned his face to the noble lord in expectation thereof.

“I think,” said his lordship, “for I can scarce be sure of any thing to-day, that you told us your name was John Mathers?”

The History of Mr. John Decastro

“I did, my lord,” quoth he.

“At all events,” said his lordship, “I am so far right—pray, Mr. John Mathers, what gates do you call those at fifty yards distance from the ferryman’s house?”

“The park gates, my lord,” quoth Old Comical.

“Do you know of any houses built at or near the said gates?”

“Yes, my lord.”

“How many?”

“How many!” quoth Old Comical; “why, there is none at all but the lodge, that I know of, my lord.”

“None but the lodge!” said his lordship; “why I’ll swear there was a shop there when we came through to-day, kept by one John Decastro; the man’s name, and the goods in which he deals, were painted in capital letters on a piece of board half as broad as this table, which was nailed up over his door!”

Old Comical stared at the wine, and then at his lordship, by turns, and looked like a man that had much ado to keep his countenance.

“Why, you scoundrel!” said Lord Budemere in a rage, “do you take me to be drunk! I’ll swear that there was a shop at the park gates this morning!”

“What there might be at the park gates this morning, my lord,” said Old Comical, “I will not venture now to say, but I am just come through the park gates with this letter, and I am sure there is no such thing as a shop there now:—but I met a mad sort of a gentleman there who was very busy in looking for one, he had not found it, however, when I came away.”

At that moment in came Sir Harry, and how wise soever he might have looked when he went out, he cer-

tainly looked very much like a fool when he came in again.

"This is the very man," continued Old Comical; "well, sir," said he, addressing the baronet, "did you find the pork and butter shop? I hope your honour had dined, for it would have been no easy matter to have got a pork-steak at the park gates."

The baronet began to curse and to swear, (and when a man is apt to tell lies it is very fit that he should swear to what he says,) that the devil had flown away with the pork shop, for there was no such thing now to be found at the park gates!—Mr. and Mrs. Decastro fell a-laughing; but Old Comical looked very grave, and said, that the pork and butter shop must certainly be a second sight, and something would happen before long at the park gates. Lord Budemere leaped out of his chair, seized Old Comical by the collar, and, doubling his fist in his eyes, asked him if he dared to deny that the whole party had stopped their carriages, had got out, and went into a shop which stood opposite the lodge at the park gates?"

"It must be a much bolder man than I," quoth Old Comical, "to dare to deny any thing while such a fist is held within an inch of my nose; there was certainly a pork and butter shop at the park gates any time to-day your lordship pleases."

"Take care what you say, you rascal," said Lord Budemere shaking his fist.

"I do take all the care I can," quoth Old Comical, "and I were mad to be careless at this awful moment—but if your lordship force me to say what you please you must e'en thank yourself if you get a lie for your pains: a man were a fool not to say any thing to save

The History of Mr. John Decastro

his eyes from being knocked out of his head; but it is very hard that your lordship cannot see a ghost without making another man swear to it!"

"A ghost! you rascal," quoth his lordship, "what ghost? I and the rest of our party got out of our carriages, and went into a little shop at the park gates, and we all saw certain quantities of butter set ready for sale in it, and a pig cut into little bits, and laid out in haslets, chops, steaks, and griskins."

"It was all air, my lord," quoth Old Comical, "the butter was a ghost, and is melted into thin air; the pork-steaks, haslets, chops and griskins all hobgoblins vanished now, shop and all, into thin invisible wind. It was well your lordship did not eat any thing in this shop; what a terrible thing it would have been for your lordship to have had a ghost in your belly!—And who can tell how a pig may choose to revisit the earth after it has been stuck? who can say that it may not come again in steaks and griskins? who can say—angels and ministers of grace defend us!—who can say that butter may not rise again after it has been eaten, and haunt people? uneasy, perhaps, at being sold under weight or over price—some damned trick or other has been played at that part of the park where the gates now stand: in ages past, some sad rogue hath kept a shop there and cheated people in former times, depend upon it, my lord—and that accounts for the whole shop and all the stock in trade appearing to your lordship."

"What sad rogue may have kept a shop there in ages past I will not say," quoth his lordship; "but this I will say, that some sad rogue kept a shop there this morning and robbed our party of the best part of an

The History of Mr. John Decastro

hundred pounds amongst us, and the matter shall be looked into before we leave this part of the world."

"Your lordship must have bought a great deal of pork and butter," quoth Old Comical, "to come to so much money, I can't think what you will do with it all! you can never eat it while it is good."

"Pork and butter!" said his lordship; "we parted with our money and have got nothing but our fools' heads to show for it!"

"What!" quoth Old Comical, "did your lordship give away your money to a spectre? What can a ghost want money for? He neither eats nor drinks, wears out no stockings, shoes, or breeches; comes into people's houses and never pays any rent,—then, unless he is taxed, what the devil can a ghost want money for? A ghost may go out of the world without paying his bills, but when he has once got clear off and out of the reach of bailiffs, constables, writs and executions, he must needs be a very foolish apparition to come poking his nose into the world again to cheat folks out of more money, and rob Peter to pay Paul: besides, if he leaves the key of the cupboard behind him, let those that come in for the bread and cheese and his clothes pay his debts—it is amazing that such trifles as these should ever disturb folks in their graves that never disturbed them in their beds! Ghosts that have had their throats cut have felt sore enough upon it, folks say, to come back again to tell the news; and some that have buried pots of money, and the heels of old stockings full of guineas, have risen again to serve an old acquaintance, and give another, with vast generosity, what they have no further use for themselves—but that a couple of hobgoblins should take it into their

The History of Mr. John Decastro

heads to come upon the earth, build a shop, stock the same, and fall to selling people pork and butter—”

“ You chattering rascal,” quoth his lordship, “ we have been played a trick, and you are quite the sort of fellow, with the devil’s help, to have a hand in it;—but, upon recollection, madam,” said he to Mrs. Decastro, “ I have a letter here, which my lady received a few weeks since, by the complexion of which we might very well expect to find you and my good brother in the very situation in which we saw you, sir, and you, madam, or two folks very much like you, at a little house in the corner of the park.”

“ I wonder,” quoth Old Comical, “ folks can be so indecent as not to shut the door when they go to such places!” upon which he fell into a loud laugh; when Lord Budemere immediately seized him by the collar, and, setting his foot upon what follows a man of consequence, kicked him out of the room. Now a man cannot go out of an apartment with more pleasure to himself, or entertainment to others, than when he is kicked out of it, and that for reasons too obvious to need any mention in this place.

“ This is an amazing long chapter!”

Very well, reader—make a mark with your thumbnail, and put the book down if you want wind—or, if you please, madam, you may lay your leg in the book to keep your place, and put the volume upon the mantelpiece, there’s no great difficulty in that.

During the aforesaid operation, we mean the kicking poor Old Comical out of the room, and none surely can be so unfeeling at the bottom as not to sympathize with what he felt in it—the antecedent to the relative “it,” fair reader, is not bottom, as you modestly sup-

The History of Mr. John Decastro

pose, but operation:—when you can pick your way you must step slap into the dirt to choose!—during the aforesaid operation, Lady Budemere had put a few odd questions to Mrs. Decastro concerning a certain epistle, which were put with such consummate art as to make a sort of double shot of it, with a sly aim at Mr. as well as Mrs. Decastro, as who should say either may answer me that pleases. Mr. Decastro, therefore, arose, and addressing his lady, who sat at the other end of the table, spake as followeth: viz., Mr. Decastro's mouth is open we know, but, before any thing comes out at it, we must beg leave to speak a few words ourselves—“Mrs. Decastro who sat at the other end of the table”—

Scholium.

A very good way to keep man and wife apart, they may quarrel, and they may pelt one another with potatoes, but as long as there are eight or ten feet of stout mahogany between them they cannot get at one another, to come to fighting before company.—But we must not forget that we left Mr. Decastro with his mouth open, who, from the aforesaid porthole of the brains, discharged the following words—

Viz.

“My dear,” quoth the loving gentleman, addressing his matter to his wife, “my dear,” said he, for it may be remembered how apt he was to drop a drop of sweet-oil in her ear, “my dear,” said he, though some husbands say, “Take that, my dear,” and give their wives a good knock on the head; but he said, that is to say, Mr. Decastro said, “my dear,” with a drop of honey hanging at the end of his tongue; “my dear,”

The History of Mr. John Decastro

said he, not calling her dear because he had given more than she were worth for her, as a man may say of a wife bought for twenty pence and a quart of gin at Smithfield, with a halter round her neck; "my dear," said he, not meaning to call her a drunken extravagant toad, that scored him up for brandy, ale, and bitters, perkin, perry, rum, and the queen's-water, at every ale-house that she got smell of—no—"my dear," said he, that is to say, he did not say what he never said—don't be in such a devil of a hurry, reader, we shall come to Mr. Decastro's speech in the course of half a score pages—"my dear," said he, stretching out his hand as if to catch her by the nose—the nose! yes, the nose; what should a man catch his wife by? what catches one's attention sooner than a pull by the nose? drag a man by the nose, and five times out of fifty you will draw his attention: adsbobs! one's wits must be gone a wool-gathering indeed, if a man hath one's nose in his hand or a pair of tongs, and we none the wiser! If any lady or gentleman cannot smell such a thing as that they can smell nothing: to fire off a gun we must pull it by the trigger; to fire off a man we must pull him by the nose:—that's nothing to the purpose at all: yes, but it is though, and for this very reason, for the nearest way from London to St. Alban's lies directly through Hounslow.—"My dear," said Mr. Decastro, stretching forth his hand, as if to catch her by the nose, "how glad shall we make the hearts of our kind friends that sit round our table, when we tell them all the good news of this our fortunate situation! when we tell them how well we have sold our butter, and to what a good market we have brought all our pigs! how all the old women brought their snuff-boxes to our

The History of Mr. John Decastro

shop for snuff, and how not a pipe was filled for ten miles round but by the genuine tobacco sold retail by John Decastro! But having scraped together a little money by honest industry, and put by a little bit of bread for our old age, having got a good house over our heads, and laid the crumbs of comfort about us, will not our kind friends join us in an opinion that it is now high time to leave off business, and resign to some other the good-will of the pork and butter shop?"

Mr. and Mrs. Decastro were certainly young people when this pretty comedy was acted, and, though some may think that it might have made more for their reputation if it had been passed over altogether in silence by the historian, it may, however, be submitted that, trifling as it may appear in the eyes of Sir Isaac Solomon, the malevolent pride and envy of some folks concerned in it met with a very seasonable rebuke in the exhibition of it. Now it is not one of the least poisonous of the ill humours that ebb and flow in the human heart, the malice it feels at the good estate of another, and the delight to see a poor man gnaw a dirty bone like a beggar's dog upon a dunghill, rather than smack his lips over a slice of venison swimming upon a silver plate in sweet sauce and rich gravy. Some of these fine folks came into Mr. Decastro's gorgeous old Castle as the devil came into Paradise, whose rage, like old Satan's, was aggravated in proportion to the good things which they found in it. Old Crab was not invited to this pleasant comedy, for, as soon as he got well of his fever, he engaged himself with that eagerness which he always felt in another's service, in the affairs of his noble brother-in-law. Good night t'ye, reader, you look sleepy.

CHAPTER XIII

Lord and Lady Budemere, Sir Harry and Lady St. Clair, and Madam Perrimont leave Oaken Grove—A little Touch upon what befel before they turned the Part which is not before upon Mr. and Mrs. Decastro.

WE hope you slept well last night, reader, and that your wife, sir, or your husband, madam, did not kick and sprawl about the bed, as the manner of some is, who go to sleep with their heads on the pillow and wake with their feet there, which is inconvenient: it puts us in mind of a story, however.—Once upon a time there lived an old maid named Madam Stickleback, very lean, and at fifty years of age what flesh she had was all turned into horn, which made her so very stiff that she had a hard matter to sit down, and, when once down, she had as hard a matter to get up again and straiten herself, so that her sitting down and her uprising, she moved so stiff in the hinges, cost her ten minutes each. Now it came to pass that Madam Stickleback, who was very regular in all her motions, turned round in her bed like the hand of a clock. She never rolled over bottom upwards or face downwards, no, she always lay flat upon her back in the very centre of a bed, which she had been measured for, and had made six feet by six, being the precise length of Madam Stickleback's body; in the very centre of which Madam Stickleback lay as aforesaid, and turned round in it like the stiff hand of an old-fashioned church clock

which turns upon a pivot stuck through the middle of it, aye turned round in it just as if Madam Stickleback's body moved upon a gudgeon and pintle exactly in the middle of her bed. Now it came to pass furthermore that the said Madam Stickleback was whimsical, and she had the twelve hours duly and at equal spaces marked in black ink upon her sheet, and she began with her pillow-bier, forsooth, upon which was put the number 12, at which hour she always laid her head down to rest. How regular Madam Stickleback was in all her motions, sleeping as well as waking, will now be seen: as soon as she fell asleep Madam Stickleback began to move, and in one hour's time her head came to one and her feet to seven, when Madam Stickleback gave a grunt, as much as to say it is one o'clock. In another hour's time Madam Stickleback's head came to two and her feet pointed at eight, when she gave two grunts, as who should say it is two o'clock. When Madam Stickleback's head came to three her feet pointed at nine, when she gave three grunts, which was as much as to say it is three o'clock in the morning. When Madam Stickleback's head came to four she uttered four grunts to give notice it was four o'clock, and so on: but not to strike Madam Stickleback all round, if a man had come in at any hour, and looked at the position of Madam Stickleback's body, he might have set his watch by her, or, if he had had her at sea he might have determined the longitude by the old virgin with as much precision as by Mr. John Harrison's chronometer. To finish our story, reader, Madam Stickleback, after a regular series of motions, and a regular number of grunts, Madam Stickleback returned her head to her pillow, and

The History of Mr. John Decastro

grunting twelve times, rang her bell and called for the cherry-brandy bottle, forasmuch as she then wanted winding up.

Now, reader, if your stomach serves for it, we will return to Mr. Decastro's dining-room, where we shall find plenty of Burgundy and claret, and a grand dessert set out in baskets of silver to the no little mortification of his noble guests, who daubed their faces with the sweetest smiles to hide the bitterness of their hearts. There was a sting in the tail of this trick of the pork-shop, which made a wound like a wasp, and injected poison into it at the same time: Mr. Decastro's shining the more brightly in proportion as his shining was the less expected, stung their souls; and their envious momentary triumph over the degraded shopkeepers, recoiled upon them in proportion to the malice with which their souls were charged: but the kindhearted countess must be put down as an exception, who retired to her carriage in tears as soon as she saw the wretched situation of Mr. and Mrs. Decastro: now it was her turn to rejoice, and her joy was worth fifty times the joy of the others.

Lady St. Clair felt more vexed than any, as it was her due, for she had been the most saucy. Lord Budemere was vexed too, but pleased at the same time: how could that be? why, reader, he was vexed to find that his brother-in-law had still more shining stuff about him than he whose title was greater, but whose income was now like to be less; and pleased to find that Mr. Decastro was not like to quarter the pork-griskin with the family arms: but in each of the hearts of the three others there was a devil's nest where the furious young harpies tore away the vitals with beak

The History of Mr. John Decastro

and talons, and made a worse stir about than the vulture did in the liver of old Prometheus.

“Brother Decastro,” said the earl, “how the devil came all these things to pass? I am in such amazement that I scarce know where I am, I feel like one enchanted!”

“Why, my lord,” said Mr. Decastro, “you are not, nor can be, in greater amazement than I was: my brother Bat has done wonders for me, and made me in every way a better man than ever I was in my life.”

“What!” exclaimed the baronet, “has Old Crab done all these things? why, it was said in town he could scarce find five shillings in the pound for your creditors! The devil take Old Crab, *I say*, for telling such lies!”

“Come, come, Sir Harry,” quoth Mr. Decastro, “I will not have my brother Bat abused; and as for lies, others may tell lies for him, but I am sure he never told any himself: brother Bat has a rugged outside, but a good and valuable heart, which lies in him like the pearl in the rough sea-shell. He spares no pains to serve a man, and will take nothing for his pains when he has done: some work the harder the better they are paid. Brother Bat will work the harder the less he gets for his labour; he will take pay at no man’s hands: he refused all I could offer for what he has done for me.—Brother Bat, said I, I will take no more rent for the farm which you hold of me: then you may take your farm, brother, said he, and hang it about your neck, and I’ll go and rent another man’s land: what the plague d’ye take me for, John? His lease fell in with several others, when he raised his own farm in proportion to all the rest—this, by the by, was

The History of Mr. John Decastro

a piece of good fortune for me and gave my brother an opportunity to put a vast addition to my income—Brother Bat, said I, I will take none but the old rent from you—it was in vain—he paid the advanced rent into my banker's hands—Brother John, he replied, I have laid by a little money for my young wench out of your land—and a little money for my wife and myself against a bad year—I am content, and I heartily thank God for his goodness. He would take nothing but my thanks for all his services, and said, you are now clear of all the world, John, it cannot call upon you for one farthing—a word in your ear—‘Take heed.’”

“Clear of the world!” said the earl; “why how came you to get clear of the world, and not only that, but find such a splendid balance to live on, when your wife told Lady Budemere that if your estates were multiplied by I know not what, they would all come but as dust into the scale against the weight of your debts?”

“Why I am ashamed,” said Mr. Decastro, “to tell you the truth, though it were well if I had no greater cause for shame; my wife and I must needs fall to summing, of all things in the world, take it into our wise heads to cast up the bills, and a glorious cast we made of it, but we were willing to owe enough, at all events, for we made it out that we owed money enough to ruin old Crœsus. I thought it best to take horse while I had one in the stable, and rode away from London as if all London had been at my heels, and ran for shelter into the north. If a man is like to come into large possessions, nine times in ten he is bred a dunce, when the more property a man is like to have, the more pains should be taken to teach him how to

The History of Mr. John Decastro

take care of it. The less a man knows the wiser he is sure to think himself, which is one of the greatest misfortunes of ignorance; I must needs think so, and got terribly frightened for my pains: my brother let me alone in order to bring my blunders to a good account, I set myself down for a ruined man upon my own knowledge, and my alarms, as it happened, have been of great use to me. When my brother opened my eyes, the first thing I saw was this, viz., that I was a great fool. Now you cannot do a fool a greater piece of service than convince him that he is one, which, indeed, is no easy matter—the thing was done in my case, however, and the first wise thing I did was to take a step towards getting wise. I had luck on my side, for my brother was at hand, who was able to instruct me, and I soon began to find that the best thing I ever did in my life was to take a few lessons of him: finding me apt to learn, he told me, by way of encouragement, that, by the help of some old leases falling in, my income, instead of being less than it was, would be more than it used to be, and that he could put me and my family into the old castle, where he advised me to live, and I most certainly will do so, in a manner quite suitable to the dignity of my ancestors."

"I am heartily glad to see this," said Lord Budemere, "but cannot forgive you, sir, for keeping your friends in the south so totally in the dark in this matter."

"To tell you the truth, my lord," said Mr. Decastro, "I do not think I left many there who would not have been more vexed than pleased at the news of my good fortune, so to keep them in the dark was to do them a kindness, who had set me to stick pigs and my wife to sell butter."

The History of Mr. John Decastro

“The devil stake me, Decastro,” said Sir Harry, “but this was an abominable trick, and I can scarce forgive you for it—but what the devil became of your pork shop?”

Mr. Decastro laughed, and said that he ordered his people to take it away and share the contents amongst them as soon as he came out of it.

“Well, but my good brother,” said Lord Budemere, “I cannot suffer such a thing to be said of your friends without reverting to it, and speaking a word in their behalf.”

“The less you say, my lord, the better,” replied Mr. Decastro, “of those whom you please to call my friends, and you will best consult both their ease and their credit, when you return into the south, by not undeceiving them in regard to my matters:—I have been much to blame, I entertained them too handsomely not to get their hatred for outshining them, and I could not so much as do one civil thing at last, but it was set down to my pride rather than to my good nature; and I am sorry to say that it is my firm belief that most of those, whom your lordship calls my friends, would be more gratified in seeing me sell pork by the pound, than thus entertaining my friends with venison and claret. I come no more among such whom I have no mind to please so much at my own expense; one way, however, I am like to gratify these my good friends, I shall vex them no more with my fine parties and grand entertainments; my wife, indeed, may do as she pleases, but these dregs have long since subsided in me.”

“Well, but devil take it, Decastro,” said Sir Harry, “you mean to come amongst us again? You must

The History of Mr. John Decastro

meet us at the old places and laugh at the hoax of the pork shop! You will not spend all your days in this odd corner of the world amidst woods and waters? Remember you have left an ill vapour behind you, come forth and shine again, and dispel, like the sun, the fog that hangs upon your name—come out of your hole and join us next season in town."

"You will not see my face again in London, Sir Harry," said Mr. Decastro.—The baronet making a countenance of surprise—"You may stare, sir," continued he, "but I come no more amongst ye, nor into a place that I cannot think on without regret."

"Pshaw," quoth Sir Harry, "you will stay here and get pickled in Old Crab's vinegar—why, man, the folks in town will be as glad to see you in it as ever."

"And as glad to see me ruined in it as ever," said Mr. Decastro, "but they are like to meet with no such sport, and so you may tell them, Sir Harry."

"Why," said the baronet, "you don't mean to stay here and turn hermit? give us a little of your company in the winter, and then to the castle with a roaring party for the summer months." Upon which Mr. Decastro putting on a grave face—"Devil take me," continued the pleasant baronet, "if he does not look like a hermit already, but he shaves, and that's a fault! You have got some good Burgundy here, Decastro," added he, swallowing a bumper and smacking his lips.

"The baronet is very merry," said Mr. Decastro, "but I have no mind to commence savage after all; I beg to say that I have not run out of the world so much because I hated it, but because I was too fond of it to be safe in it: no, St. Clair, I do not altogether hate it, but lest I should see enough of it to make me

The History of Mr. John Decastro

hate it I made my escape before my good opinion of it were quite worn out; and hope you will allow me to put it as no ill proof of my good temper to have lived so long in it and not hated it."

"By heaven!" said the baronet, "this is a drop of Old Crab's verjuice!"

"Come, Sir Harry," said Mr. Decastro, "I will not have Old Crab, as you call him, abused, I owe a great deal to his good care of me, and if I have found one friend in the world brother Bat is the man."

"A man!" quoth the baronet; "dame Nature was in a devilish cross humour when she put him on the stocks! And she is a comical toad when she takes it into her head; here's a link between the birds and the fishes in one place, and there's a link between the plants and the animals in another; there's a link between the vegetables and minerals in a third; but when goody Nature formed Old Crab there she made a fourth link between a man and a bear." *

The ladies, who had some time since retired to the drawing-room, now sent for the gentlemen, but Lord Budemere and the baronet could scarce be persuaded to exchange the Burgundy and claret for tea and coffee, liquors much less to their taste—they walked into the drawing-room, however, after a few more glasses, and what came to pass therein we now proceed to say.

Now it so befel that Mr. Decastro walked first into the drawing-room, and this to show his guests the way, not because they were drunk, but because they had never walked into his drawing-room before, which was one reason why they did not know it—upon this their

* A curious verbal anticipation of Darwin, and of the so-called missing link.—*Editor's Note.*

The History of Mr. John Decastro

walk to the apartment of the ladies, Lord Budemere touched the baronet upon the shoulder and said in a whisper, "I wonder very much, St. Clair, what is become of our money?"

The baronet, who very well knew that it was much the way of money as it is of a wild bird, never to return to a man's hand after it hath once flown out of it, said, "Upon my soul I had almost forgot it, my lord, let us drop a little hint about it presently."

"A hint!" said the earl, "I will make no hint of the matter; I will ask for it, I assure you, before I leave the house: I have as little to spare as any man—money is money to me—I never was so much out of feather in my life; or, upon my soul, St. Clair, I would have settled my Newmarket bets with you before this time: if Old Crab will but do half as much for me as he has done for Decastro, I shall soon get all my debts off my hands."

"Upon my soul, Budemere," said Sir Harry, "I am not a little surprised at his undertaking your matters after the discovery you told me of."

"This comes of hoarding up old letters, Sir Harry," replied his lordship; "the matter was this—Old Crab opposed the match between me and his sister Miss Decastro; and, setting me down for a rascal, came to a quarrel with his father upon not securing her fortune to her uses; I, not a little enraged at this, wanting, as I did, a supply of ready cash at that time, made matters as bad as I could between him and his father, and spurred him into such a fury against his son, that, to make me amends, he disinherited Old Crab: most of this business was unluckily managed between the old gentleman and me by letter; and Old Crab, looking

The History of Mr. John Decastro

over Decastro's papers when he settled his affairs for him, in an evil hour found the whole correspondence."

"This was the devil!" said Sir Harry, "but how could you excuse yourself?"

"Why," replied the earl, "I was struck dumb for a time; I took my pen, however, and wrote the best apology I could, and have not seen Old Crab since: when we meet I am afraid I shall look like the greatest fool of the two."

They now walked into the drawing-room, and what was very extraordinary, they did not find the ladies silent in it.—How so? surely the wonder lies all on the other side; it lies in no such place, reader, for who could have thought they had not talked themselves presently to death, having so much matter as they had to talk upon?—Now some folks have gone so far as to say that a woman does not talk after she is dead, if any please to believe it; it may be doubtful; we, however, have our reasons for not thinking it is an impossibility: but as papers, pens and ink would fail us if we put down one-tenth of all the ladies said, we will pick a few choice flowers only, of rhetoric we mean, not to get our brains turned with the metaphor, for metaphors are apt to addle men's brains, and, though it be a great truth that no lady from the beginning of ladies down to the last new petticoat, ever said a foolish thing, forasmuch as it is the prerogative of the men to keep all the silly things to themselves—except what they print—where the devil are we got?

One moment, reader, let us step back to the beginning of the sentence to see how we set out, and what it was that we were talking about—why should an author know what he is talking about? it is the proper

The History of Mr. John Decastro

business of the reader to find all that out; the author has nothing to do with that part of the matter, it is his business to find words, but as for meanings, reader, that is your look out; we leave that to you, and if there be no connexion in what we say it is the fault of the book-binder—it is his business to stitch all matters together: do we not give you words, fine words as any in the dictionary? If you have words enough for your money, reader, you have no cause for any complaint; for when a man buys a book, what does he buy but words? as, when he buys a house, what does he buy but a heap of bricks? and if they all lie loose, it is all the better, he may stick them together just as he likes: folks make a fuss about architecture, and what is it after all but the sticking one brick to another? sticking words together is something like it—put down your money, sir, and we will find words enough and leave you to sort them and lay them in courses: what! do you think we take you for a fool, reader? if we find words, it were an insult to suppose that you could not find sense yourself: if you have none you are no better than a fool, and had best let books alone, for, if a fool must needs buy what he don't understand, a fool and his money are soon parted:—hold hard at that—he that buys your book can never be a fool: a word to the wise—if every fool in Great Britain take a copy a-piece your work will soon see its tenth edition: very good, reader, put down your penny and set the example, and Solomon in all his glory could not do a wiser thing. But we were talking about the ladies, and the pretty things that came out of their mouths—and a lady cannot spit but out falls a diamond, or a pearl; and that is the reason why pearls and diamonds are so cheap that

The History of Mr. John Decastro

London now-a-days is paved with precious stones—when a man pays a compliment to the ladies, the greater the lie may be that he tells the better, for the greatest lie is the soonest believed!

Lord Budemere was not a little astonished at Old Crab's readiness to look into his affairs after having found him to be the instrument of his disinheritance. Old Crab, however, was ready to do any man a good turn, friend or enemy, it was all one to him; notwithstanding this temper of his, however, he would often revenge an insult upon the spot; a fault, he used to say, that took him every spare moment of his life to make amends for. Lord Budemere succeeded to a noble estate and married a noble fortune too, for Miss Decastro, as hath been said, came into his house with her sister Peggy's fortune as well as her own; for poor Peggy was disinherited too—Old Decastro laid about him when he was in his tantrums—Lord Budemere had plenty both of land and money, and some very fine houses, but prodigality was the moth that fretted the garment—Not to tell Mr. Decastro's story over again, however, in another man's name, suffice it to say, that Old Crab found his lordship's matters in a much worse condition than his brother John's matter; but more of this in another place.

We will now look into Mr. Decastro's drawing-room, where the gentlemen upon their *entrée* found the ladies talking with all their might. Lady St. Clair, who was stung with more scorpions than one, seemed to be in a state of much inflammation; she was making some pretty free remarks upon Mrs. Decastro's masquerade, as she called it, and went so far as to say, though not in so many words, that she was not at all times in a

The History of Mr. John Decastro

humour to be made a fool of; she would not have it thought, she said, that she could not take a jest as well as another, but thought at the same time that people's feelings were not to be trifled with in such a manner. Colonel Barret's story, seconded and confirmed as it was by Mrs. Decastro's letter to Lady Budemere, the insinuations of which she left to the writer's conscience, if they might very well deceive people single-handed, what could be expected from their forces united but an unqualified belief, that every thing in the idle butter-shop were true? She, for her part, she said, was not very easily imposed upon, but she as much believed that all she saw in it were true, when she threw her purse into Mrs. Decastro's ragged apron, as she believed that she was a breathing creature. Mrs. Perrimont, who could talk as well as Lady St. Clair, wound up her argument with saying, that the result of this pretty piece of mockery amounted to making a jest of a friend who came to do a kind thing: she loved a jest as well as any body, but never could give countenance to a joke that sacrificed the feelings of one's friends. Lord Budemere, whose money ran a good deal in his head, put in a few words by main force at this place; for he had never come in but by downright strength of voice: begging pardon for interrupting the ladies, with much politeness, he said, that the whole party felt extreme sorrow at seeing Mr. and Mrs. Decastro, whom they used to see moving in the first circles in the world, now degraded into shopkeepers, and in this the large contributions which they made might very well bear them out; his pity, he added, had never picked his pocket to such an amount before. In this they all agreed, except the kind countess, (who retired,

The History of Mr. John Decastro

as it may be remembered, in tears and sorrow to her carriage,) and looked as if they could be very glad to see their charity-money coming back again—into which language Mrs. Decastro construed their eager looks in a moment, and, unlocking a little gold box which stood amongst a profusion of other ornaments upon a work-table, she first took out the earl's thirty-pound note, and, returning it to his lordship, said:

“As far as you pitied the poor pork and butter-woman I am obliged to you, and to you, Sir Harry,” returning his money; “and to you, madam,” returning Lady St. Clair's; “and to you, Mrs. Perrimont,” returning it with an elegant courtesy to each, as she restored them their property;—then turning to the countess and kindly shaking hands with her, she added, “but you, my dear sister, gave me nothing but your tears, a more precious gift by far than any sum of money;—there is more true charity in one kind drop that falls in private for the sorrows and sufferings of others, than in a thousand guineas proudly ushered into the notice of the world in all the pomp and parade of public contribution.”

In a few days Lord Budemere and his party left the castle.

CHAPTER XIV

How Old Crab's Aunt Biddy died one day—How Old Comical set folks a-laughing at Church, singing of Psalms—How old Crab scolded him thereupon—How Old Crab went into Northamptonshire to make his Aunt's Will—How Old Crab called upon the Lord of the Manor of Cock-a-doodle.
Old Comical takes the pen.

Now it came to pass that Mr. and Mrs. Decastro kept a bright eye upon Lord Budemere and his party, until they got them all safe out of the house—never once lost sight of them—no—for how soon is a silver fork, or a silver spoon whipt into a man's pocket! How soon is a bottle of gin or a cask of brandy tucked under a woman's petticoats! Mr. and Mrs. Decastro had a right to look about them as long as they had any thing to lose, and more especially as Lord Budemere's party admired vastly all the pretty things that they clapt their eyes on in the castle, and when people fall to admiring another man's goods, their fingers are sure to itch like fury! As soon as they were gone, Mr. and Mrs. Decastro began to count their spoons and look into the henroost, and found, to their great joy, that if any thing was stolen nothing was missed. Now it came furthermore to pass, that Mrs. Decastro and Lady Budemere came down with a world of salt water at parting, and they smacked one another's faces with their red lips as if they would bite one another's heads off.—Well, away they went, the Earl and Countess, Sir Harry and Lady St. Clair, and Mrs. Perrimont,

The History of Mr. John Decastro

and, as good luck, and a good look out would have it, there was nothing missed in the house after they were gone, except a box of corn-salve belonging to Mrs. Pettitoe the housekeeper.

How busy Old Crab was at this time! for what with setting his brother-in-law Lord Budemere's house in order, and darning his estates, and making his aunt Biddy's last will and testament, he scarce knew on what hand to turn him.

Old Comical was smoking his pipe over his toast and ale and nutmeg in porch at the farm, "John!" quoth Old Crab, "come for orders:" forasmuch as it may be remembered that Old Comical was Old Crab's bailiff and clerk of the parish, and said Amen to all Old Crab said in church o' Sundays, "John!" quoth Old Crab, "come for orders."

Whereupon Old Comical made his appearance in Old Crab's little parlour with his brown jug in one hand —what! leave such precious liquor all alone in the porch! —with his brown jug in one hand, and his pipe in one corner of his mouth, and his wig turned bush forwards to keep the flies off his forehead.

"Master," quoth Old Comical with his pipe stuck in his face, "here am I."

Old Comical smoked a long-tailed pipe in summer, forasmuch as the vapour, coming through a long vein, came cooler into his mouth, but the aforesaid Old Comical smoked a short pipe in winter to keep his nose warm, which hung over the bowl thereof with a purple chilblain at the end of it, for the frost snapped at Old Comical in winter-time as if it would bite his nose off: "Master," quoth Old Comical, "here am I."

"John," quoth Old Crab, "I am called into North-

The History of Mr. John Decastro

amptonshire to make my aunt Biddy's will, for she hath taken it into her head she may die, it appearing by the register, here, that lies on the table, that she is ninety years of age. This paper contains orders for what I would have done in the farm, and this purse of money to pay the men for three weeks: bid the carter give Old Crop a good feed of corn, I shall set out for Northamptonshire to-morrow morning: take these three sermons to Dr. Rosybottom, and tell him to serve my church three Sundays: a word with you, John: if you cannot sing psalms without making such faces you shall sing no more; you have set the people a-laughing these two last Sundays: if you cannot sing psalms without screwing your cursed jaws about in such a manner, you shall not sing at all, but sit still in your desk and let others sing—twisting your chaps about as if you did it on purpose to disturb the congregation."

"Look you, Master," quoth Old Comical, "I sing with my quid in my mouth, and that it is that is the cause thereof—the tobacco lies quiet enough in plain singing, but when I come to a shake the quid dances about like a devil. I was beating in my throat upon the vowel *o* in a noble trill last Whitsunday, when suddenly my quid began to dance—I was so rapt up in my grupper that I forgot all about it until it leaped out of my mouth into old Grimes the sexton's, who was in his demi-semi:—and do you think he would let me have my quid again?—no, the devil-a-bit: he'll be hanged some day if there is a loop or string to spare—no—he tucked it into the corner of his jaw in the middle of a staff, and as soon as the psalm was out he shut his mouth, and I saw no more of my tobacco. If Old

The History of Mr. John Decastro

Grimes goes to the devil, if I don't send a chaldron of your best round coals after him I'll be—”

“John,” quoth Old Crab, “thou art half drunk, what ale hast had to-night?”

“Did you ever know me do things by halves, master?” quoth Old Comical: “look you, master, I have received some good news of late, and was willing, I know I am welcome to your tap, I have received some good news of late, and was willing to throw down t'other mug upon it; I know I am welcome to your tap, your honour.”

“Good news, you scoundrel,” quoth Old Crab, “what good news? except that the key was left in the ale-cellars door.”

Upon which Old Comical blew a long volume of smoke out of his mouth into Old Crab's face and eyes, and putting him into a thick fog, communicated to Old Crab what Lady St. Clair had told him in the ferry-boat, namely, that his brother had printed an advertisement for him, and was willing to pay him his legacy. Old Crab said he would call on his brother before he left Northamptonshire, and look into it; but added, that he was not at all pleased with Old Comical's behaviour at church, and if he could not behave better in it, he would order the church-wardens to put him out of it and disgrace him in the presence of the congregation; subjoining, that if he found no better return for the clerkship which he had given him than turning the psalms into ridicule, and setting folks a-laughing in church, Old Comical should be turned out of that too as well as the church, and another take his office.

Now it came to pass that the next morning at four

The History of Mr. John Decastro

o'clock Old Crab mounted Old Crop at the *upping-stock* at the house door; whereupon he smote the old mare with his oaken towel, and off trotted Old Crop with Old Crab and his saddle-bags.

Now upon the arrival of Old Crop and Old Crab at Skeleton House, for that was the name of his aunt Biddy's palace, he found the old lady's carriage at the door, and her already dressed in her best tackle to go to a ball. Now at that time the clock struck ten, and the cock had been upon the perch an hour:

"Aunt Biddy," quoth Old Crab, after the usual ceremonies of salutation, "I am come to make your will:" and cast thereupon his eye over a gay knot of artificial flowers stuck with an air into the old lady's cap.

"Hæ, hæ, nephey," quoth the frisky old lass with a smile, "it will be time enough for that to-morrow, I am going to a dance in the neighbourhood:" when, giving her people orders to take care of Old Crab, and Old Crop, who had trotted many a weary mile, poor old toad, with a foal in her stomach, (we must not say belly, for that is indecent,) when giving her people orders as aforesaid, the old lady stept into her carriage with a little more alacrity than her aged limbs could well afford, that complained in half a dozen loud cracks that they were in no such skipping humour. Old Crab sucked up his cheeks at the gay old lady, who scuttled into her coach too quickly to leave him any time for a reply.

The next morning at breakfast, "Aunt Biddy," quoth Old Crab, "d'ye mean to dance into your grave with a tabor and pipe at your tail? In the devil's name, d'ye know how old ye are?"

"Past fifteen, nephey," quoth the merry old virgin with a smile.

The History of Mr. John Decastro

“Past fifteen!” quoth Old Crab; “d’ye know how many fifteens there are in ninety?”

“I love the age of fifteen so well,” quoth she, “that I don’t care how often it comes over.”

“You have got it in your head it seems,” quoth Old Crab, “that it is time to make your will; now, look ye, madam, if you can get the fiddles out of your brains, I have a world of work on my hands, and could be glad to come to the business:” upon which he went on to tell her that he had a great deal to do for her nephew Lord Budemere, who was running post haste to the devil.

“His lordship should have come there long ago,” quoth she, “for every body said that he took the nearest way: whenever he gets there, however, he will be sure to meet with a warm reception, for he and the devil are old friends; hand and glove, nephey Bat, on the best of terms.—You have another lame dog to help over a stile, then, it seems, nephey Bat; but John is upon good ground again, you tell me.”

“Yes, but this is the most confounded business of the two by much,” quoth Old Crab; “I have just written to the blockhead, and told him that I must put him on spare diet these ten years, before I can get this lame dog upon all fours again. I got disinherited, and kicked out of the kingdom for giving that very advice, which, if taken, had saved my sister’s fortune; that, and all the money the frugal old lord left, is spent: but come, to the will—it has been high time any day these last forty years.”

“Accidents may happen, nephey,” quoth she, “accidents may happen to the youngest of us all.”

“Accidents may happen!” thundered Old Crab;

The History of Mr. John Decastro

“aye, you may die in a ball-room, and be fiddled into eternity: the devil take these colt’s teeth, how they stick in your mouth, old woman! What d’ye mean to do with your money? ’tis time you thought about it while the spark of life sticks in your old tinder, if a serious thought can come into such a bedlam.”

“Come, come, Old Crab,” quoth aunt Biddy, “will you never leave off spitting brimstone and sulphur?”

“Will you never leave off galloping, dancing, rigging and romping amongst the boys and girls? answer me that, old female. What money have you in your banker’s hands?”

“Not a groat,” said aunt Biddy.

“Not a groat,” quoth Old Crab; “why, how the plague can you contrive to spend three thousand pounds a-year? answer me that, ye old romp.”

“I never was a miser, nephey,” quoth the old lady; “but you know, who manage all my money matters, madcap as I am, that I never once outran the constable: and, truly, what is money good for? how can we put a penny to a better use than to call one’s friends about one’s house, and make them all happy, hæ, nephey Bat? if one is merry and wise, hæ, nephey Bat?”

“You are merry enough,” quoth Old Crab, “if you were but as wise, and old enough too to be more of the one and less of the other to my thinking.”

“Why, look you, nephey, the more merry the more wise, that’s my motto, though it mayn’t be so much to your liking.—I give a ball to-morrow, and to-night I am going to a masquerade, so if you please we will come to parish business as soon as we have done breakfast. I may die, hæ, nephey Bat? I may die, the youngest of

The History of Mr. John Decastro

us all may die, nephey Bat! hæ, hæ, hæ, nephey Bat!" whereupon the old lass clapt her hand gayly on Old Crab's shoulder, and sang the following staves:

Come, a thing that begins with an F* for old Care!
Grief shall ne'er make a crack in my old earthen ware,
I'll dance, drink, and sing, frisk, chuckle, laugh and chatter,
And as soon as I am dead the devil take my empty platter.

Sing fal lal liddy tiddy di do!

Look ye, Old Cock-a-doodle, how the sun shines to-day!
A louse for the hangman, we'll be merry while we may:
Old tussy muzzy grief, curse her picture, is a drab!
But mirth is a funny lass, what sayst to that, Old Crab?

Sing fal lal liddy tiddy di do!

"What d'ye think of that? hah, hah, nephey Bat?"
"A merry old cat!" quoth Old Crab.

"Merry! aye, nephey," quoth aunt Biddy, "I danced four dances last night, fell in love, and dreamed that I was kissing my partner. Die! why you don't think I mean to die because I sent for you to make my will, Old Crab? I'm not dead yet, nephey Bat, I am not dead yet."

"I will tell you a piece of my mind," quoth Old Crab, "the sooner you are dead the better for the reputation of ages past; you may be taken for a sample of what women were formerly, and bring more disgrace upon our great-grandmothers than their share comes to, galloping about at this time o' day to balls, routs and masquerades; I wonder what the plague ails you for my part, or what the devil is come to a parcel of old bones! Come, send the crockery away, if a will is to be made."

* *Scholium*—What could the old lady mean if not farthing?

Upon which the old lady rang her bell, and, having cleared the breakfast table, the butler put an inkstand under Old Crab's nose, who, dipping his pen therein, and taking a sheet of paper, said, "Now, aunt, what is your will? what d'ye mean to do with your money?"

"Why," said she, "folks are apt to part with their money when they can keep it no longer: John, you tell me, is upon good ground, and like to keep so—and a man worth three-and-twenty thousand pounds a-year has enough and to spare for himself and his children; there is my nephey Lamsbroke too is rolling in money; and, as for my lord, he would spend Mexico in one day and Peru in another, and not know where to find money to buy a supper before he went to bed; besides, these good folks never come near me, never make any inquiries after me no more than if I had a ton of marble upon my bones—not they—I know as little of them and care as little: they all live at a vast distance from me, certainly, but a kind letter now and then would comfort my old soul: you have always been a kind and dutiful nephey, taken care of my money, done all my business for me, all my little matters, saved me all expense and all trouble, and moreover put three hundred pounds a-year to my income by your skill and knowledge in the money markets—you, therefore, I make my heir, who ought to have all that John enjoys at this moment, if my brother had not listened, like a hot-headed fool, to Lord Budemere, who, to tell you a secret, was the sole cause of your being turned out of your estates. I tell you this that you may take no trouble in that man's matters, who has been the greatest enemy that you ever had to your back."

"In the first place, aunt," quoth Old Crab, "I have

The History of Mr. John Decastro

to say that this thing is no secret to me, for I found a packet of letters, and their answers, among John's papers, when I settled his matters, that told me every thing: in the next, I have to add that I will have none of your money, madam: what I have done I have done, but I will have none of your money: John lets me have my farm cheap, and I have improved my church: I have enough, and will take none of your money, not I."

"Highty, tighthy," quoth the old lady, "none of my money, quoth-a: why, you don't know what is good, nephey, you don't know what is good—not take any of my money! O' my conscience, 'tis the first time a bag of gold ever went a-begging! For the shame of the world and the speech of the people! what will folks say if I leave my money to another after all you have done for me? Who will tell my story for me after my bones are dry, when some fleering coxcomb shall lift his foot upon my tomb-stone, and say, here lies an old toad under a slab that deserved to be buried under a dog-kennel—how she used her nephey Bat after all he had done for her, curse her picture, a man that would ride five hundred miles an end upon a full gallop to come and cut her corns for her! an old harridan, to cut such a man off with a shilling! My meaning is this, nephey Bat, I would leave a sweet scent behind me, and not sneak out of the world with my tail between my legs as a dog does, after having committed a nuisance in the parlour. My Lady Wixwax and I had a world of talk upon this matter the other evening over a dish of gun-powder tea, but I believe neither of us heard one word of what the other said for hours, for we both talked together the whole time. Seeing

The History of Mr. John Decastro

how matters were like to go, we agreed, at last, to take it by turns to hold one another's tongues in the sugar nippers: gracious heaven! how Lady Wixwax did run on after the ninth dish of gun-powder! I paid her off, though, when it was my turn to nip, though her tongue quivered all the while between my fingers as if I had got hold of the tail of a snake. Curse my picture, nephey Bat, if I think there is a woman beneath the silent sun that can talk so long, so lively and so loud as the old Countess of Wixwax. We came both of us at last upon one thing nephey,—that you was the man for my money; and if you will not take it, or take it into your own family, curse my picture if I shall go out of the world with quiet bowels."

"What have I done to deserve your money," quoth Old Crab, "what the plague have I done to deserve your money? I'll have none of your money."

"My name," quoth the old virgin, "will stink above ground after my body is turned into snuff and my coffin into a snuff-box. I cannot abide ingratitude, nephey Bat. What did I know about worldly matters? I should have been robbed and ruined but for your services—they ought and shall be rewarded: in the first place, put your daughter Julia down for ten thousand pounds."

"What the devil art at, aunt," said he, "will you turn the daughter's brains by way of reward to her father? you will put the wench out of conceit with the man I would pick out for her husband, and set her a-sniffling about after fine gentlemen."

"The money shall come into your house, nephey, if I commit a new sort of burglary, break in and put it there. Didn't you wrest my fortune by main force out

The History of Mr. John Decastro

of the hands of my old uncle Benjamin, who claimed all the principal under some flaw in the deed of trust? —put ten thousand down to little Julia, and, if you are afraid of the girl's running mad, keep it a secret till after she is married."

"Is there no way to thank a man for what you are pleased to call his services," quoth Old Crab, "but by cramming money down his throat? If I have done well, I shall not lose my reward, aunt; if ill, justice will be done me, though you get upon my house top and shake guineas about our ears out of your petticoats. You have made the offer, you can do no more, let that satisfy your conscience—rest you content—my doors are bolted against your money."

"One word more," quoth aunt Biddy; "you have nothing but pewter in your church since it was robbed of the silver service; now I will not be denied in this thing, I will leave a thousand pounds to furnish the Communion table, with this inscription upon the principal piece of plate, *Be it known to all, that this service of Communion plate was bequeathed to the Rectory of Oaken Grove by Bridget Decastro, in token of her gratitude to her Nephey Bartholomew Decastro, Rector thereof, being the only return that he would receive at her hands for the manifold and valuable kindness which she received at his.*"

"Well, well, aunt, I shan't stick out, I shan't stick out; if you make me your executor it shall be done according to your order, but let me put on the inscription in Latin."

"No, no," quoth she, "in English, it shall be in English, and then every body will understand it."

"Well, well, I shan't stick out," quoth Old Crab;

The History of Mr. John Decastro

"now for your money: if you are at a loss I will give you my advice, aunt, but I am come to make your will, not my own."

"My nephey Lamsbroke is rich," said she, "and only one child; my nephey John is rich, and has only two—."

"One word, aunt," quoth Old Crab, "John has one son unprovided for, the youngest, named Acerbus, who is the favourite; he has not a penny of money in the world, and the estates are settled in strict descent; the eldest, therefore, will come in for all, and the youngest for none, any further than what his father can save for him: now, although I do not think it very likely that John will run back into his old courses, yet we cannot put too many bolts upon that door; leave what you will to Acerbus under this condition, that if his father lays by two thousand pounds a year as long as he lives, Acerbus shall come in for the benefit of your will at his father's death, if he be then five-and-twenty years of age; if not, as soon as he shall be: in case of his death to be divided equally amongst his children; if none, his brothers; in case of none, then among Sir John Lamsbroke's son's children; and again, in case of none, among Lady Charlotte Orby's children, your nephew Budemere's daughter: my aim in this thing is to make a check of a favourite child upon the profligate propensities of his father. I have now some hopes, however, of John; he has smarted too much to put his head again in the fire, or I am very much mistaken in this matter."

"Very well," said she, "I am content, since you will take nothing, nephey Bat, that these things shall be so. What is John's eldest son's name?"

"Frederick, a good for nothing young dog as ever was hanged or unhanged; he may mend, belie," quoth Old Crab, "or he may go out of the world, some day, kicking in a string at the end of the devil's fishing rod, the gallows."

"Come, put him down a thousand pounds, a little legacy, that's all, to be his when he comes of age, to save a little promise I made."

After a few other trifling bequests, Old Crab was made executor, the will attested, put into a small cabinet, and the key thereof assigned to the care of Old Crab.

As soon as the will was put into the cabinet, and the parish business, as the old lady called it, was done, Old Crab, whose way it was to abuse folks to their faces, and do them a good turn behind their backs, began to cast it in his mind how he might be of service to poor Old Comical, and asked his aunt if she knew, or had heard of such a person as 'Squire Mathers? Old Crab could not have applied to a fitter person, for there was not a family of any the least note within twenty miles of her house but the gay old lady was well acquainted with it.

"Nephey," said she, "I know Mr. and Mrs. Mathers very well; he has a very good estate at a place called Cock-a-doodle; it is about fifteen miles from hence, and if you will stay with me and go to the masquerade tomorrow night given at Lord Star's, you shall be introduced to the man, if you have any thing to say to him."

"I go to a masquerade!" thundered Old Crab; "what the devil have I to do at a masquerade?"

"Do? why you may come very well in character of a

The History of Mr. John Decastro

Cynic," said she, "and abuse every body you meet, nephey."

"What do you know of this man, aunt?" quoth Old Crab.

"Know of him? why I know more than is good, as I do of most of my acquaintance," said she; "there is a story of his having defrauded a brother whom none ever saw here, and most believe to be dead, of all the patrimony which his father left him, by giving out that his father died intestate, and coming in for all the property as heir at law; but he and his conscience had a quarrel upon it, and, as when rogues fall out, honest men come by their goods, he owned publicly that he had found a will, and had reason to think everything did not belong to him, because his father had bequeathed five thousand pounds to his brother John; upon which he fell to advertise for him, but hearing no tidings of his brother, he kept the five thousand pounds in his pocket, either because he did not know whom to give it to, or because he thought the money might as well be in his own pocket as another's: but what have you to do with this man, nephey?"

"No matter," quoth Old Crab, "I have a little business with him; but that's neither here nor there, aunt Biddy, and if you know it, it will be every where."

"What! can't I keep a secret? Yes, indeed I can, very well," said she: "do tell me what business you have with Mr. Mathers, upon my honour I will tell it to no soul."

"And I will take care you shall be as good as your word, for you shall not know it," quoth Old Crab. And aunt Biddy never did tell it, for this reason, amongst others, because she did not know it.

Early the next morning Old Crab mounted his mare, and having made his inquiries, made the best of his way too to 'Squire Mathers, and he was at his gate at Cock-a-doodle, before the sun or the 'squire was risen: so he gave Old Crop to a groom, who put her into a stable, and Old Crab said he would take a turn and stretch his legs, and by that time the 'squire might be stirring. Upon Old Crab's return at a very good time, videlicet, breakfast time, the 'squire begged he might be shown into the house, and taking Old Crab into his study, wherein he did his justice-business, begged to know his complaint.

"I am come to lay an information against a man, an please your worship, being told that you are a magistrate in this place, who has robbed his brother of five thousand pounds."

The 'squire started; whether it was his conscience that made him start, or what it was, must be left to the guess of the reader: the 'squire started, however, and changed colour, and said he could go no further in the matter than have the man taken into custody, for which he would give proper orders.

"Will your worship give me authority to lay hands on him if I can come at him?" quoth Old Crab: that he certainly would, he said: "and bear me harmless for the assault?" quoth Old Crab.

"I will," said the 'squire.

Upon which Old Crab instantly seized the 'squire by the collar, and said, as Nathan once, "Thou art the man." The 'squire complained a little of this usage in his own house, but being a man of temper, begged to be informed whom he had injured, and what was meant by this rude attack; adding, that he was very willing to

redress any injury which he had done any man, if any such charge could be fairly made out against him.

Old Crab then told this story; upon which the 'squire confessed that he had found a will, and had done all that lay in his power to find his brother John; he further owned, with great candour, that he had secreted the said will, and told his brother a lie when he came to demand his money; for Old Comical had been told by his father that he would leave him five thousand pounds, which was all that he had in his power to leave him, as the estates were settled in descent, and the tenant in reversion could not be brought to cut off the entail. The 'squire further said, that however extraordinary such a confession might appear, since he might so well have concealed the matter, he begged to explain the matter by saying, that he hated so much the thing he had been, that he thought the whole world owed him a shame for it; he had therefore published the whole truth, together with his hearty repentance of what he had done. The most welcome news that he had ever heard in his life was that his brother John was found; and as for his money, it was ready for him at any time when he, or his attorney, would call for it; for none knew, nor could any imagine the pain and compunction of mind which he had suffered for what he had done; saying this, he fell into such a fit of laughter as to be under a necessity of holding his sides with both his hands for several minutes.

Old Crab was not a little offended at this unexpected sally, and was preparing to express his anger, when Mrs. Mathers came into the room in some haste, being told a stranger was with her husband in it, well knowing what might happen if the stranger staid long with him.

“Sir,” said she to Old Crab, seeing her husband convulsed with laughter, “you will not take the thing amiss when you are told that my husband is very subject to fits of this sort.”

“That may be, madam,” quoth Old Crab, “but I am in no humour to be laughed at for all that.”

Upon this Mr. Mathers laughed so loud that Mrs. Mathers could scarce be heard to speak, and out he went, at last, laughing out of the room, holding his sides with both his hands. Old Crab and Mrs. Mathers being now left at the mercy of each other, “Madam,” quoth he, “’tis well he left the room in time, or I would have broken his bones.”

“You will not hear me, sir,” said she.

“I came here upon no such laughing matter, madam.”

“He means no harm—no disrespect.”

“What the plague does he mean?” quoth Old Crab, in a voice that shook the house.

“Hear me, sir, one word; my husband is subject to fits—to epileptic fits: he is sometimes seized even in church with these fits of laughter. I came into the room, knowing what might happen, in all haste, lest a fit should take him, as it usually is the case when with strangers—the thing comes from his father, who was a very great laugher, and died, at last, in a fit of laughter, at seeing a man going along the church-yard to be married, with St. Vitus’s dance.”

“Madam,” quoth Old Crab, “I am sorry for your husband’s infirmity, and am glad you came in time to save his bones, and should now be glad, if the fit hath left him, to come to a conclusion of my business.”

Upon which, being shown into the breakfast parlour,

he found 'Squire Mathers writing a letter to his brother John in it, with much gravity, when he presently put his seal upon it, and delivered it to Old Crab, and falling into another fit of laughter, left the room.

Mrs. Mathers, having curiosity enough to inquire into Old Crab's business, said, that she was sorry the thing could not have been broken to her husband, for, knowing how much the poor man had suffered in his mind upon the business, she feared the sudden surprise and joy of his brother being found would be of dangerous consequences to him. The 'squire, however, presently returned, and expressed much satisfaction at the news, and said it was the happiest day of his life, made his excuses for his infirmity, which seized him with more force upon any unexpected emergency, and added, that an invitation was given in the letter to his brother John, whom he begged to see as soon as possible at his house, when his father's legacy should be duly paid him, as promised in the letter, with all the interest due upon the money.

After breakfast, Old Crab left Cock-a-doodle, and returned to his aunt's house at dinner time. The next day he put himself upon his journey, and in due time he and his mare came safe home to Oaken Grove farm. Something remarkable, however, befel on his journey which must not be omitted; it was, that before he had ridden five miles from Skeleton House, he was called back again by a man who galloped after him at a furious rate, to say that his aunt was taken very ill: upon which Old Crab pulled up Old Crop, who had got into a steady trot with her head towards the north, and giving the right rein of the bridle a twitch, tacked the old mare round, and put her head just in the very

The History of Mr. John Decastro

place where her tail was, whereupon Old Crop trotted back with Old Crab to Skeleton House, too late, however, to find any more than the remains of Mrs. Bridget Decastro, and a little bit of paper, containing some directions about her funeral, which, and some other matters, being left sole executor, detained him more than a week.

CHAPTER XV

Some Account of Frederick and Acerbus, Mr. Decastro's two Sons, who were sent to Eton School—*Old Comical holds the pen.*

HERE follows some account of Mr. Decastro's two sons, Frederick and Acerbus, who were sent to Eton school. It came to pass that the eldest son, Frederick, promised very faithfully to become a dunce, though a lad of no common parts: and it likewise came to pass that the youngest son, Acerbus, a lad of very superior abilities, promised as faithfully to become a good scholar, and they kept their words.

Frederick said that he should have money enough to buy things as he wanted them, and if any knot occurred, it would be time enough when it did to pay another to untie it for him if he could not untie it himself, so he followed his head in spite of the rod, and did just as to him it seemed meet. Being told that Homer, Horace, and Virgil were famous for their lofty flights, he said they would suit him very well, so he sat himself very diligently to work, and made paper kites of them. But the saddest thing of all, he grew very vicious, sware terribly, and, having worn out all the old oaths, made new ones, and taught them in the school: he gambled too, and fished all the money out of his school fellows' pockets.

When he was sixteen he fell ill, of a disease without a name, whereupon his father was fain to send for him,

and see to his cure at home. As soon as he was well, he begged earnestly to be sent back again to school to finish his education, lamenting that he had lost so much time, and, having promised his parents to do his best to make it up, he got a gun and shot a fawn in a neighbouring park, had it dressed at an inn, and made fifty of the biggest boys in the school dead drunk at a sitting.

Acerbus was a very good boy, and grew to be the best scholar ever known in that school. Frederick said, that things were just as they ought to be, for it was the elder's birthright to be a dunce, and no schoolmaster of them all should flog him out of it: younger sons were apt enough to put in for it, but he loved his brother all the better for not disputing that title with him.

When Mr. Decastro had bought as many hard words as might be sufficient for their admittance into the University, he carried his cockle-shells to Oxford, and entered the eldest at Christ-church college, and the youngest at Merton; and this in order to divide the honour of their breeding, as it would have been too much for one college to have the honour of breeding them both.

Change of air and place did not change their minds: Acerbus was every thing that the University could wish him to be, and Frederick, on the other hand, every thing that the University could wish him not to be. Acerbus grew better and better: Frederick worse and worse. Frederick, when he left Eton, had been flogged two thousand six hundred and forty-nine times: his brother cut a notch on a tally at every flogging, and, as he heard matter were collecting for their history, he put his tally into the hands of the historian

amongst other documents of the like importance. At the University, Frederick played the very devil, and, it was thought, would have been the ruin of the place single-handed, if disease had not stept in and laid him by the heels: yes, Frederick's stars forbade him that honour; and certainly a moderate man might well be satisfied with less than the destruction of an university.

He did his best, however, to do his worst in order to it, and fought like Hercules against every thing that stood in his way, and took the pains to read the Bible in furtherance of his plan: he burlesqued the psalms, and made indecent songs of many, and sung them in company, to the great amusement and contentment of the gownsmen. As to the Christian religion, he said it was a lie from one end to the other, and the founders impostors, as he could prove, if called upon, which happened once upon a time, when he gave a man a sound thrashing for his impertinence. Now, if a man knocks down his opponent, it is one proof that he cannot stand against him; so after this he was let to have his saying, for, though many had regard for religion, there were few in the University that had not more for their bones; and this was reasonable enough.

Frederick never went to college prayers but when he was drunk, and neither knew what he did nor whither he went; so it was always a very bad sign when he came into chapel, for he was usually carried out of it at full length, inasmuch as the coolness of the place sat the liquor at work in him. At length Frederick fell sick; for the strongest constitutions cannot stand their ground long against every sort of debauchery.

His brother, Acerbus, now wrote a letter to his

father to say, that Frederick lay at death's door; when down came the old gentleman on a full gallop out of the North, and carried him at all hazards out of the University: but his removal was attended with certain difficulties, which threw the old gentleman into some perplexities, forasmuch as a set of honest worthy men, who lived in the habits of trade with the University, opposed the litter in a close body, and made it known to Mr. Decastro, with considerable clamour, how unwilling they were to part with their old acquaintance; and so attached were they to the poor young gentleman in the litter, that Mr. Decastro could by no means clear the road of them until such time as he had distributed drafts on his banker to the amount of seven hundred pounds.

Half a year elapsed before Mr. Decastro got his son Frederick on his legs again; the vigour of whose constitution carried the point at last against both medicine and disease. His father now took the advantage of the return of health to read him a lecture in moral philosophy. Frederick heard the peal with patience till his father wrung him upon his debts?

“Why, sir,” interrupted he, “would you have me sneak about the University as if my father was a rat-catcher, or consult his honour and credit in it, and live like a gentleman?”

“How far my credit was consulted,” quoth Mr. Decastro, “in an arrest in one of the most public streets in the University, I will not say.”

“But,” interrupted Frederick, “what father ever had so fine an opportunity to shew what he could do for a son in distress? your name, sir, after such an act, will be deathless in the University.”

"I have paid pretty dearly for my immortality," quoth Mr. Decastro; "and now, sir, I must beg to tell you in your ear, that since you cannot make your allowance serve you, another shall; for not one penny shall you be master of without your tutor's knowledge and consent, to whom, in future, I shall pay what money I please to allow, and make Dr. Remnant the bearer of the bag, with orders to bid any tradesman in Oxford trust you for another halfpenny at his peril."

This speech was concluded with a loud report of the door upon the old gentleman's going off, which made Frederick's ears tingle for ten minutes.

After a pause—"Money must be had," quoth Frederick, keeping his eye upon the door as if he expected his father would return upon him—"Money must be had: a man had as good live among devils in torments as live in the University without money. My father was a fool not to make my tutor my cashkeeper at first, and when I had known no better: this is my uncle's advice: my father was put in the head of it"—here he fell to cursing Old Crab at random. "My blood scalds my arteries at the thought of asking for every penny, like a beggar, at my tutor's door; and, what makes bad worse, I shall be laughed at, and called a young bear with a ring in his nose—a bridled bear!"—here he poured forth the execrations in such volleys as if he had swallowed an emetic to throw the oaths off his stomach! "What!" resumed he, "must I feel the iron of a tutor's curb? twitched back whenever he pleases to pull the rein? it were enough to make a man's heart fester in his body."

Upon this he took two or three turns about the library, wherein his father had left him to his medita-

The History of Mr. John Decastro

tions, biting his nails and his lips by turns, and then, as if he pieced out a sentence half made in his mind—“but if they buckle me alive on a gibbet they shall be disappointed—if I wince I'll be——” here he fell a-swearing again.

At this moment his brother Acerbus came into the library; “Frederick,” said he, “you are to return with me to Oxford to-morrow.”

“With all my heart,” quoth he, “I love Oxford, and shall be glad to see it again.”

“My father says,” quoth Acerbus—

“Aye, aye,” said Frederick, interrupting his brother, “I think my father's plan is a very good one; money was my greatest enemy, and my tutor is now to fight my battles for me; I have had enough of it—money only brings a man duns: when people know I have none, they will let me eat my bread in quiet.”

So on the morrow, Frederick and Acerbus returned to Oxford.

CHAPTER XVI

Mr. and Mrs. Decastro's Motions recorded down to the Present Time.

MR. and Mrs. Decastro, sometime used to their saddles, trotted on without any loss of leather, pleasantly enough: she spent two or three months every year in London, so that there was not much galling upon her part—no plaster wanted there—no, no, no plaster—no—how could that be while she sat upon a soft cushion in the gayest city in the world, with her head all broke out in diamonds, and pearls stuck upon her hair as thick as nits, a man might have combed out a handful, combed where he would.—No, no, no loss of leather there, while the grand castle in the north was talked of with envy, hatred and malice, joy, rapture and proud indignation.

Well, but talking is but talking after all; what did she do in London to make folks stare? Had she a grand house in a grand street or square? Had she half a score roaring impudent rascals with gaudy liveries upon their backs, hired to kick the world into the kennel whenever she came forth to take the air?—no such things: she had her waiting-maid, and only one footman. No carriage? no; she used her friend Mrs. Grove's carriage, at whose house she usually resided—no house! no equipage! no swearing in the streets at her expense! no hurricanes! no earthquakes! no trembling of the globe upon its axis beneath the thunder of

The History of Mr. John Decastro

a thousand wheels driving to her balls, concerts, cards and masquerades—Hold hard at that—Mrs. Decastro made one great noise every time she came to town—she borrowed the house of the Earl of Budemere, a noble mansion, and crammed it with human flesh and blood until the walls cracked, and crowds were suffocated, by way of entertaining her friends—yes, alas! Lord Budemere's house, who could no longer afford to fill it himself, poor man, there had been too many fillings already for that; so she borrowed his house and servants, and made the devil of one night of it; and if people were not squeezed as thin as wafers it was no fault of hers.

Now squeezing is a sign of love, and she gave her friends as much as they could bear of it one night; she straightened their ribs for them; for none could stay long in the rooms with a crooked one, there was no room for any such thing—room! a man could not swallow an egg but it was squeezed back into his mouth again, there was such a crowd! folks went in in good clothes, and as fine as hands could make them, but when they came out they were as ragged as beggars, and some without shoes to their feet! Poor souls! no sheaf of wheat was ever worse handled in a thrashing mill, than a man or a woman in Mrs. Decastro's grand rout; this was what she called, very properly, bringing her friends together.

But this unexpected breaking out of the Decastro family into new glory, when it was fondly hoped their sun would shine no more, when they were thought to be sunk into eternal darkness, this rising again with such unlooked-for splendour did worse than make people's eyes ache; the reason of which thing, reader, is

The History of Mr. John Decastro

this, videlicet, folks think that the more A shines the less B is seen, and that is the reason why they are for putting out every body's candle but their own.

But to come again to Mrs. Decastro flinging her glories about her without mercy, all this blazing soon brought the engines, as about a great fire, and a great deal of foul water was squirted at her from various quarters: some said she shone with borrowed lustre, borrowing, as she did, Lord Budemere's house and servants to help out her show: she said she made no merit of her entertainments, her sole object was to do the handsome thing by her friends; she aimed at no grand matter; if her friends were pleased her ends were answered, she looked to no other; neither did she make use of her acquaintance as the building materials of ostentatious pomp; she had no temples of fame of that sort to erect; and as for shining, she thought they shone the brightest who made no fuss about shining at all: the less light some folks had about them the better, for it only shewed others what great fools they were:—no, no, if she had any object of that sort in view, she should not borrow other people's houses to give her friends a little music, a dance or a supper: some were not content unless they called thousands into a great room to shew them what fools they could make of themselves—peace to all such—she had long since been taught to despise these follies: she came to town with a servant or two, and was content to put up at a friend's house in a very private way, as it best suited the wife of a ruined man; and though her entertainments were the most magnificent in London, she made them out to be nothing at all: if any praised them, she would say, it were a thing in a hired room, or a

The History of Mr. John Decastro

sandwich, a glass of wine and a fiddle in a borrowed house—her friends were so good as to take the will for the deed—and the like, when an entertainment had cost a thousand guineas.

Mr. Decastro felt a little gratification in this at a distance, when he read accounts of his wife's parties in the papers in a snug corner—Old Crab said it was impossible to wash all the dirt out of a mud wall, for there must needs be dirt in it as long as a bit of the wall were left. Mr. Decastro, however, was as much changed, as a thing made of Mr. Decastro's materials could be, and though many had a good pull at him, none could ever pull him out of the old castle into the world again—this was Old Crab's doing, and it may well be said to be marvellous in our eyes.

But we must now turn our style to other matters.—The name of Grove has already occurred in this our history; we shall proceed to give the reader some account of this family.

CHAPTER XVII

Some account of Mr. Grove and his Family.—*The pen sometimes in the hands of Old Comical, and sometimes in the hands of the Solid Gentleman.*

MR. GROVE was a very old friend and schoolfellow of Mr. Decastro, a very quiet man, and very rarely spoke one loud word—his manner was to carry his nose up to a man's ear, and deliver all he had to say into it in a whisper. Mr. Grove had a wife—where on earth could he have picked her up?—Mr. Grove had a wife who seldom spoke at all, but made use of signs as far as signs would go, like one born dumb: when she wanted wine, or gin, rum, brandy or queen's water, she would point at the bottle; when she wanted tea she would point at the canister; and when she would send for the gentlemen into the drawing-room after dinner she would erect a finger at the butler.

One day when her maid offended her, the woman dashed out of the room in a moment, for she said that her mistress put on a terrible frown and pointed at the poker.

These two good folks coming together, somehow or other like flint and steel, struck out a pretty spark, and called his name George, a very excellent young man, and, being an only child, he had like to have got killed with kindness—more of him by-and-by.

Mr. Grove's estates lay near Mr. Decastro's fine old castle, and he lived at a place called Hindermark, a

The History of Mr. John Decastro

noble place, well known to all in the north of England who are not ignorant of it. Mr. Grove was glad at heart to find his old friend and schoolfellow Decastro was come to live near him, and he cut three capers the first time he heard of it: and Mr. Decastro was glad at heart to find that he and his old friend and schoolfellow, Grove, were such near neighbours, and he cut three more capers when he heard of it, which made six capers all together.

Mr. Grove had a fortune of twenty thousand pounds a year, which some give as one reason why he was not a poor man, and it may be a good one, whatever private doubts some may entertain of the matter, for some old cunning stagers have held forth that they are not always the richest men who have got the most money. Mr. Grove, however, was very frugal, and never paid away a shilling without looking at it on both sides: but he kept a good house, and called his friends about him, like a noble gentleman, both in town and country, notwithstanding; but he hated noise, and if a servant spoke a loud word he would ring his bell and ask what was the matter. When he and his wife came to a quarrel it was always carried on o' both sides by signs and motions, which grew at times so vehement in every part of their bodies that was movable that they seemed to a looker-on like two people in strong convulsions: by the time all was over they had usually perspired so much that they were fain to call for a change of linen: but of this thus far.

Old Crab was the first man to bring Mr. Grove the news that his brother was coming to live in the old castle.

“Mr. Bartholomew,” quoth Mr. Grove, running his

The History of Mr. John Decastro

long nose into Old Crab's wig, "Mr. Bartholomew, it gives me great joy to hear of this matter," whereupon Mr. Grove cut his three capers as aforesaid.

"Master Grove," quoth Old Crab, "what the devil ails ye?"

"My joy has given me a motion, Mr. Bartholomew," whispered Mr. Grove; "my joy has given me a little motion, that is all," pulling his long nose on one side with his right hand to get nearer to Old Crab's ear.

Now it came to pass that Mr. Grove had his nose in his hand when Mrs. Grove came into the room—yes, Mr. Grove had his nose in his hand when Mrs. Grove came into the room, for it stood forth like a long pole of flesh to the length of six inches straight out of the middle of his face.

"Sugar of my life," quoth Mr. Grove to his spouse, walking up to his wife with his nose in his hand, and blowing the hairs off her ear for the better conveniency of whispering, "sugar of my life," said he, "Mr. Bartholomew Decastro, here, comes to tell us the good news of my old friend John's coming to live at Oaken Grove—"

"Why the plague can't ye speak out," thundered Old Crab; "there's always such a whizzing and whispering amongst ye, as if ye had got something in your heads that ye were ashamed of, speak out!"

"Mr. Bartholomew," said Mr. Grove, "we shall be exceedingly glad to see you to dine with us upon this good news to-day. There was not any mischief done by your brother John when he was a boy for ten years together but I had a hand in it, Mr. Bartholomew; not an old woman turned at night with her lanthorn bottom upwards to the stars, but I laid hold of one leg, and

John, my good friend John, laid hold on the other; no duck knocked on the head but John and I each threw a stone at the same time; no dog canistered but I held his tail while John, my friend John, tied on the canister: ah, good Mr. Bartholomew, you must dine with us upon this good news to-day, yes, indeed—" upon which Mrs. Grove pointed to a chair, which was as good as to beg Old Crab to sit down.

"I shall be starved to death before your dinner is ready," quoth Old Crab; "what time d'ye dine, Master Grove?"

Mrs. Grove held up three fingers, which was as good as to say they dined that day at three o'clock.

"Well, well," quoth Old Crab; "I am going round to some of John's tenants; we have some old leases falling in this Michaelmas, we must try to give them a hoist, ha, Mr. Grove, you understand me, the scoundrels have got as fat as hogs upon these old rents:—I'll call and eat a bit of victuals with ye when I come back;—and d'ye hear? bid your butler put some toast and nutmeg into a tankard of that strong beer I drank of t'other morning, I should like a hair of the old dog, Master Grove."

And Old Crab was as good as his word, for punctually at three o'clock, aye, while Mr. Grove's turret-clock was a-striking, the Old Crop mare trotted up to the house with Old Crab upon her back and a foal running by her side, and stood very quiet at the gate while she got rid of Old Crab on one side and gave her foal suck on the other.

"Take care of the mare and colt," quoth Old Crab to the groom, who came running in his scarlet and gold jacket, "take care of the mare and colt, you gold-laced

rascal, or I'll embroider your back with my cudgel and give the tailor a new pattern for the next livery."

We have no time to break out sideways and tell long stories, but Old Crab had picked up the groom that ran in for his mare, naked as he lay upon a dunghill, in London, thrown there and deserted by his mother in one of her good humours to take his chance for a nurse of a better temper—yes—called by his cries, picked him up, wrapped the baby in his handkerchief, and put him into his great coat pocket; the lad, knowing Old Crab's way, smiled while Old Crab shook his oaken towel over his head, and had little need be bid to take care of Old Crop and her foal, for he owed Old Crab quite as much as he could ever pay if he lived to the age of Methuselah.

"I hope, Mr. Bartholomew," said Mr. Grove, when he came in, "you have not been beating poor Will, he is one of the best lads in the world."

"No, no," quoth Old Crab, "I've done the scoundrel no hurt, not I."

"If you were to see the lad weep, and hear him call you his kind father, as poor Will often does in my presence, I am sure you would not hurt him," said Mr. Grove.

"He comes after one of my wenches," quoth Old Crab, "and makes the baggage as idle as she can hang together, I'll break his bones next time I catch him in my kitchen.—Your second bell has rung, why the devil don't your villains bring in the victuals?"

At that moment the butler, with four or five more servants at his tail, came in with the dinner; they all smiled at the sight of Old Crab for some reason or other, who seized a knife and fork and put half a pound

The History of Mr. John Decastro

of boiled beef upon his plate the moment after he had said grace.

As soon as dinner was over Old Crab, at the earnest desire of Mr. and Mrs. Grove, gave a very particular account of all he had done for his brother John, at which Mr. and Mrs. Grove expressed great satisfaction.

Mr. Grove's son George, who went to Eton school with Mr. Decastro's two boys, Frederick and Acerbus, was then at home:—what is he pulled in at this place for? To put the reader in mind that there was such a person, and likewise to say that he was sent to the University with Mr. Decastro's two sons, and also that he was always a good boy, and minded his book, and did as he was bid:—there was a son! when comes there such another?

CHAPTER XVIII

How matters went on with Mr. Decastro's two Cockle-shells at the University—how Acerbus, the youngest, was called the Philosopher—how Frederick, the eldest, fired a brace of balls at his Brother, left Oxford and the stink of Gunpowder behind him.—*The pen in the hands of the Solid Gentleman, with now and then a dash from Old Comical, when the Solid Gentleman was fain to step forth upon his needs.*

HERE followeth an account of Mr. Decastro's two sons, and what they did at the University.

What a pity it is that a man cannot go to a shop and bespeak a child, and give orders how he would have him made! and, if he did not like the work after it was done, what a pity it is that he could not send him back to be altered! what a devil of a pulling to pieces there would be! how much work would be unripped! what alterations in soul and body before a man could get a child to his mind! But, as matters are, fathers and mothers must e'en take children rough as they run, half man half angel, half man half devil, and 'tis well if half and half can be got in the thing. O Lord! a man had better hire himself out to a pastry-cook, and make giblet pies all his life, than have any hand in such an odd composition!—But the earth must be peopled and be—

As soon as Frederick's tutor, Dr. Remnant, heard of the arrival of his hopeful pupil, he sent for him to his pupil-rooms, and gave him to understand that he

The History of Mr. John Decastro

and his money were to be parted until further orders, read him a long lecture upon vice and extravagance, and issued a programma that any tradesman in the University should put his name in his books at his peril. Upon Frederick's leaving the pupil-room the doctor put five shillings into his hands, and bade him not spend it all at once for fear he should make himself sick. Frederick made his bow and left the room jingling the five shillings between his fingers. He felt vexed at heart, but made a countenance as if nothing were the matter, and had the dexterity to lay his plans so far under water as to leave a smooth surface, so that none could guess where he had sunk his works.

He began by putting the best leg foremost on his way to reform, and grew all on a sudden so different a thing from what he had been, that some thought him out of his wits: and he so carried matters as to baffle the officious malice of his tutor, who had not a new rod put into his hands for nothing, by drawing an odium upon Dr. Remnant upon the score of too severe a treatment of a penitent person. In the mean time he consulted one Corduba, a Jew, upon the one thing needful, who, having made due inquiries into the nature and extent of his father's property, made no scruple to grant supplies of money to Frederick from time to time under certain securities. Upon this Frederick fell to sinner it in private, and saint it in public, and went so far as a regular attendance on prayers and lectures required him, avoided much wine, at such time as there were like to be any danger of being seen drunk, and kept some things with caps on their heads at some distance from the University.

Frederick now began to breathe fresh air upon his

successes, and so managed the thing as to get the pity of all to himself, and his father and tutor all the blame. After a little time the doctor got stung by hints and innuendoes, and he sent for Frederick one day and spake as follows: "Your conduct of late, sir, has been such as to gain my approbation; you have been very regular in both public and private lectures, attended prayers in chapel, and I have not seen you drunk these two months." Upon which the doctor put five guineas into Frederick's hand by way of reward for having been a good boy.

"I should hate myself," said Frederick, in anger, "if I could take any reward for doing well!" upon which he flung the guineas slap-dash upon the floor, some of which danced into his tutor's lap as he sat at his desk, and left the room in great indignation.

Dr. Remnant upon this immediately wrote to his father to tell him the good news, but Frederick, though very much pressed, would not go home with his brother at the next vacation. He would appear no more, he said, in the presence of his parents until he had expiated his past conduct by a voluntary banishment: say what they would, no entreaties, no prayers, no tears could bring him to the castle; another, and another, and another vacation came, but no Frederick; he punctually sent his love and duty by Acerbus to his father and mother, but no forgiveness, no offers of pardon, no powers of persuasion could bring Frederick back again to Oaken Grove.

Acerbus was a shrewd fellow, and could see as far into a mill-stone as another could thrust his nose: books and he were always together, for he took them to bed with him, which was a proof of the strength of

The History of Mr. John Decastro

his appetite—he had a lamp ever burning in his room, and if he awoke in the night he fell to reading that moment. He not only grew to be the best scholar of his day, but the wonder of the University for his learning, his virtues and his oddities. Some called him a monster because he was, as folks were fain to think, without a fault—to say the truth, a better young man could scarcely be, or one more eccentric. If some called him the monster, most called him the philosopher; so when any said “Here comes the philosopher,” or “thus said the philosopher,” or, “I was talking with the philosopher,” all knew of whom men spake. In person he was a very large stout man and had a fine Roman countenance, and his face was as red and as round as a cricket-ball. What business had a studious man with such a red face? He portioned out his time, reader, to exercise as well as study, well knowing that the health of the body and the health of the mind, like twin cherries, grew upon the same stalk.

But our philosopher had nigh got shot through the body upon the following occasion; videlicet, he called upon his brother Frederick one morning, and fell to question him, in the Socratic manner in which he usually argued, upon his sudden reformation, and, after a little time, drew him into some contradictions, which put Frederick into a violent passion. The philosopher so managed the matter as to make his brother think he had made some discoveries, for, to say the truth, the philosopher had some time had his suspicions that all things were not quite right in Frederick: after a few artful questions, which poor Frederick was wofully at a loss to know what to do with, or how well to get rid of, the philosopher, seeing Frederick’s alarm, asked him:

The History of Mr. John Decastro

“How comes it, brother, that now you are grown good you exist in the midst of fears and apprehensions, when, being bad, you were afraid of nothing? is it that you would seem to be what you are not, and so the fear of discovery teases you with alarms?”

“Discovery!” said Frederick, “what discovery have you made, sir?”

“Why,” said the philosopher, “that you are afraid something had been discovered, which is a sign you have something to hide: now, answer me, brother, what is it that a man had rather hide, a good thing or a bad thing?”

“Why,” said Frederick, “a bad thing, for all are ready to show a good one.”

“It is well said,” quoth the philosopher, “but has any man any reason to fear lest he be discovered to be a better man than we take him to be?”

“Certainly none at all,” said Frederick.

“But if he hath any bad thing in himself he has reason enough then to be afraid lest we find him out to be a worse man than he seems to be?”

“Yes,” said Frederick.

“Is it true then,” quoth the philosopher, “that when any bad thing be in a man and he fain would conceal it, that there is no cause for any alarm lest that bad thing be discovered in him; but when a good thing be in a man, the terror lest it be found in him fills him with consternation?”

“This is a fine question,” said Frederick;—“why a man who has any good in him need neither fear, nor show signs of fear lest it be discovered.”

“Remember, brother,” said the philosopher, “it is you that affirm these things, and that it is I that only

The History of Mr. John Decastro

ask the questions.—We are agreed then,” continued he, “that it is the bad man only who hath some ill thing to hide that shows signs of alarm lest that ill thing be discovered?”

Frederick saw that the philosopher was drawing him into a snare, but where it lay, or how to avoid it, knowing the stake he had, called for his best lookout: “Certainly,” said he, “the last must be true, for nobody was ever hardy enough to deny it.”

“That may be a reason,” quoth the philosopher, “and yet a man may be deceived; or why should you be afraid lest any good thing be discovered in you?”

Frederick upon this grew pettish, and said that he would not answer for what lies might have been told.

“What reason,” quoth the philosopher, “have you to suspect any lie to be told? and, let there be a lie told, what then? The good have lies told of them as well as the bad, nay, rather, for bad men are most willing to calumniate the good, and it often happens that the more a man is belied the better he is; so, if to be belied be a sign of merit, you need not be uneasy on that head: and, if I am told you play the mask upon us, for instance, and throw yourself out for the thing which you are not, you are nevertheless the thing you are, notwithstanding any uneasiness you may feel to be found to be better than you are thought to be.”

“Thought to be!” said Frederick, with considerable warmth, “thought to be what?”

“Why,” said the philosopher, “you have confessed, and put yourself into a great pucker at the same time, that when a man is conscious of no ill thing in himself he shows no signs of distress, then what makes you, brother, in such a taking? Symptoms will attend a

The History of Mr. John Decastro

disease, sometimes, which no patient can conceal; if a man be really bad and would bear himself out to be good, and suffer signs of evil to break out, he hath either got more devil in him than he can manage, or is an undergraduate in hypocrisy."

"Pray, sir," said Frederick, with a terrible oath, "do you take me for a hypocrite?"

"I take you to be," said the philosopher, "no more and no less than you have confessed yourself to be: have you not named the disease and the symptoms by which it is known?"

"I have great reason to suspect that you have picked up some lie," said Frederick, and hesitated.

"A lie!" said the philosopher, "what, something said in your praise do you mean?"

"No, Mr. Sneerer," said Frederick in a loud voice, "though a lie may be told in it, I do not mean so."

"If one told me that you were a great hypocrite," said the philosopher, "were that a lie told to your discredit?"

"The devil is in it if it were not," said Frederick, pacing about the room.

"What!" said the philosopher, "if you played the hypocrite with great wit and skill? or in so clumsy a way as to be found out to be an impostor? for if any said that you had great wit and skill, were that to your discredit? Put the case, for instance, that you wore one face at Oxford and another face at Abington—"

The naming of this town was accidental in the philosopher; it happened to be the place, however, where Frederick kept his mistress, and laid the scene of all his debaucheries:—the spark fell at once into the middle of Frederick's combustibles, he flamed out in a

The History of Mr. John Decastro

moment, and, discharging a tremendous volley of oaths, he ran to his escritoir, from which he took a brace of loaded pistols, and throwing one across the table to the philosopher, said :

“If you alone, and I suspect none other, have found out what I am, and what my father’s severities have forced me to be, I have yet a chance—take that pistol, sir, the luck will be yours or mine; if mine, no tales will be told; if yours, I shall not be in the way to hear them!”

Saying which, he ran up within the table’s length of his brother, and fired at the philosopher, who received a brace of balls in a folio edition of Plato’s works, which he had just time to interpose by way of shield, and saved his life thereby; for, had it not been for the interposition of a brother philosopher, Acerbus had been shot through the body. He instantly laid hands on Frederick, and disarmed him of the other pistol, which he had seized to make a second shot at his brother, and coolly taking Plato under his arm, called on Dr. Remnant, and told him a story which turned the doctor into stone.

Upon the doctor’s return to flesh and blood, he took the book, and, upon examining Plato, found the bullets had penetrated as far as that divine philosopher’s dialogue upon the immortality of the soul.

Frederick, as soon as his brother left the room, saw no time was to be lost, so packed a portmanteau with what clothes and money he had, and made all speed out of the University. He took the Abington road, and, getting into Bagley wood, made a halt in a thick part of it, and fell to plot his future conduct. As good luck befel he had just received a supply of money from

The History of Mr. John Decastro

the Jew, amounting to one hundred and fifty pounds, which was, within a few pounds, all he had at present to subsist upon. As soon as it was dark, he crept out of his hiding-place, and made the best of his way to Abington.

CHAPTER XIX

What became of Frederick—How he met with Colonel Barret
—His success at a Gaming house—How he discovered a
trick at Cards.

UPON reading over our last chapter, we find that there is a little mortar wanted here and there to fill up a chink or two in the building. To apply the trowel to the proper places—Frederick, as soon as he had shot at his brother, saw him instantly put his hand to his bosom! for the book, which he held out as a shield, was driven with great force against him by the impetuosity of the bullets, and gave him some pain from the violence with which it had recoiled upon his stomach: Frederick, therefore, took it for granted that he had wounded his brother, and as soon as he went out he fell to barricade the door, and opened a back window, the iron bars of which he had made to lock and unlock at his pleasure, to be ready to leap out if he found his castle besieged: all being quiet he packed his portmanteau as aforesaid, but upon buckling the last buckle of it he heard one knock at the door, and demand admittance. Frederick knew his tutor's voice in a moment, but, not being quite prepared for the lecture he expected, he threw his portmanteau out at the window, leaped out after it, and, as good luck would have it, got clear out of the University without any questions asked, or meeting any body that took much notice of him. He then made the best of his way to Bagley

The History of Mr. John Decastro

wood, where he hid himself, as we observed at the heel of the last chapter, until night, when hunger and an eager desire to make his escape, brought him out of his hole, and he proceeded to Abington. As soon as he came into the town he went immediately to his mistress's lodgings, who informed him, to his no small consternation, that his brother had died that day of his wounds. Frederick, when he had a little recovered from the blow, for this dreadful intelligence almost knocked him down, began to inquire into particulars, knowing that it was not quite impossible that Fame might have told a lie once in her life. The woman said, that her sister had come from Oxford that day and told her the whole story, who would not deceive her, or be deceived herself, for she had her intelligence from one of the scouts of his own college; she very earnestly begged him therefore to make his escape out of Abington as soon as possible: upon which a post-chaise was sent for, and Frederick, putting his mistress, his portmanteau and himself therein, set off with all speed for London.

He had not been many days in town before he fell among thieves, a thing that can scarcely be believed in so honest a place; where a man may hang his purse full of money upon a nail at Temple-bar, and come and find it as safe there the next morning as the next minute. Notwithstanding, however, that such a thing as a thief was never heard of in London, Frederick made shift to fall among a great many, who, being very well aware of the sanctity of the metropolis, were fain to put on the exterior of good and honest men to be like other people.

The first he met with was Colonel Barret, whose

The History of Mr. John Decastro

name has already appeared in this our history: now the colonel was a gambler, and a very wise man: now to be wise is to know things, and among sundry others the colonel knew this, viz., that a time must come when Frederick's father must leave to another what he could no longer keep himself, at which time, should he live to see the day, Frederick would come to be a bird worth his plucking.

The colonel met him at a coffee-house, ordered his dinner to be put upon Frederick's table, shook him well by the hand, asked how all his friends did in the north, for he was an old acquaintance of Mr. Decastro's, and he and Frederick soon grew to be cod-fish and oyster-sauce, that is to say, reader, they relished mighty well together.

"Freddy," quoth the colonel, "I remember thee in thy nurse's arms, and have danced thee upon my knee many a time before thy dad took his freak and ran into the north:—he has played us a fine trick with his sham bankruptcy:—but I say, Freddy, what brought thee from Oxford to town in term time?"

Frederick then said he had come to a quarrel with a *brother-collegian*, and had fought a duel, and thought it were expedient to be absent until matters could be adjusted, for he had wounded his man severely, and his life was despaired of.

The colonel said it was a dangerous thing for boys to play with fire, and then asked him if he had got any money in his pockets? if not, he would supply him with what he wanted as long as he staid in town upon a little bit of post obit paper. After dinner he took him to a gaming-house. Frederick had a hundred and fifty pounds in his pocket, which was all he possessed in the

world; upon this, after a little looking on, he sat down to play, and skinned a young nobleman, who must be nameless, of an estate worth eight hundred pounds a-year. At that very moment he was taken extremely ill, carried out of the room by four men, and put into a hackney coach with orders to be driven to his lodgings. As soon as the coach drove off, Frederick, all on a sudden, came to be as well as ever he was in his life, bade the coachman tack about and drive him to Mr. Petticraft the solicitor's chambers. Now it came to pass that Frederick, by Mr. Petticraft's help, got hold of the estate aforesaid by the handle; that is, the right thing to hold it by, and went no more to the gaming-house;—no—he went to see his estate instead, which he never might have seen, perhaps, if he had gone back to the gaming-house; so, ordering a post-chaise, and putting his mistress, his portmanteau and himself therein, away he went, in jolly ostentation, to see his estate and visit his tenants in the country. He shewed the farmer his title-deeds, told him he had bought the property, let the tenant a new lease, the old one being worn out, and raised the farm to a thousand a-year. After which he shook his tail, received half a year's rent, and he, his mistress and his portmanteau returned to London.

Received half a year's rent! why, he had been in possession but a few days—how the devil could that be? Reader, we have no mind thou shouldest bite our nose off—the last half year happened to come due while Frederick was at his tenant's house, so he took the money, and gave the farmer a receipt for it. Suppose we happen to make a blunder, reader, canst thou not pass it by without roaring like a bull at

The History of Mr. John Decastro

a blue blanket? Let folks find faults for themselves.

The colonel, who, in the mean time, it seems, had heard of Frederick's good luck at play, came into the old coffee-room, and found him at dinner in it.

"What," said Barret, "have you found Oxford too hot to hold you, or are you come back to try if any more estates are to be picked up at Hazard?"

Frederick, who had a pretty knack at reading a man's thoughts in his face, laughed, and said he had a mind to see how long it would be before he found matters out.

Barret called him a sly dog, ordered his dinner on Frederick's table, and, taking him now to be grown a little more worth his notice, after some hearty shaking of hands and other professions of friendship, remonstrated with Frederick on his using a friend with so much reserve as to leave him to find out his good luck from others, when a confidential communication would have given so much more pleasure; artfully putting his distance to the score of timidity, as if he were to look for a reprimand from an old friend of the family for such his deep play; which indeed he could hardly approve in one so young, for though the thing were innocent enough when used with discretion, young men, however, fired at a little good luck, were apt to run past bounds. Frederick took occasion to thank Barret for his good advice, and other tokens of friendship, and took his admonition in the letter, and not as Barret intended it, as a spur rather than a check to play, judging from his knowledge of young men, that to advise them not to do a thing was, for the most part, the very way to put them on doing it. He told him,

truly sensible as he was of the value of all he had said, that there was little occasion for it notwithstanding, for he might depend on it none should ever draw him to risk a bird in hand for two in a bush—he should play no more.

Barret, who began to find that he had missed his way, and willing to draw him on, taking it into his head that he might as well have this delicious estate as another, said, the advice which he had given him did not apply to the present case, neither could he be thought to call him off where his honour was concerned in any matter. Frederick asked him what he meant by that? He said, that he had met the young nobleman who had lost the estate, several times, who had expected to find the winner in his place, and ready to give him his revenge; had been much disappointed, however, in not finding him in it, and had let some thing fall as if such dealings were not honourable: Barret went on to say, that however tender he might be of Frederick's morals, it were ill done if he overlooked the care of his honour, and he had gone so far as to pledge himself for his appearance and readiness to do every thing which could be expected in a man of honour.

Frederick again expressed his thanks and said, that for once he should rest his reputation on the plea of raw inexperience, youth, and ignorance of the world, and take care in future to run it into no further risk, and, in order to it, the best way would be to go no more to the gaming-house, and upon this he was quite determined.

Barret, nettled at being still flung off, said, he had engaged himself for his friend's appearance, that he

The History of Mr. John Decastro

had made his excuses from time to time, and that his own honour as well as Frederick's—

Interrupting him, Frederick said, that he must beg leave to differ from his worthy friend, and others, in his notions of honour, and, though he owned that he felt a wish to be better acquainted with those gentlemen to whom he had been introduced when last he was in town, yet, like as he was to differ with them in opinions, he was come to a resolution to see their faces no more, it should not be his fault, however, if he did. Upon this he arose, called for his bill, and, excusing himself upon a little engagement, wished Colonel Barret a good evening, and went away.

On his return at night he found a note of invitation from Barret to dine at his house the next day. Frederick had his doubts, not knowing whom he might meet, and suspecting some plot on foot to get him to play, refused to accept the invitation. Barret called on him in the morning, and assuring him no man would be at his dinner whom he could have any the least objection to meet, Frederick promised to come.

On his arrival he found none whom he knew, but stood well on his guard, for he was full of suspicions. After dinner some left the room, and Barret amongst the rest, when those who remained in it tried to make him drink. Frederick drank a few glasses with them, and made a shew as if he were fuddled: upon which they held their hands, and one went out, and, presently they who were absent returned with Barret, who made excuse of some business for himself and the rest, and said, "Now, gentlemen, if you please, we will walk into the other room;" where tea and coffee, card, and other tables for gaming were set out.

The History of Mr. John Decastro

A young nobleman, who must be nameless, now came in; he had been expected at dinner, but did not come on some account; he made his apologies in a very elegant manner, and, after taking a slight repast in another room, joined the party and sat down to play. Frederick, who feigned himself half drunk, was presently asked by one to play; and Barret, who stood by, said, he need not fear anything at his house, where crown whist was the utmost risk any ever ran in it; gentlemen betted, however, what they pleased. Frederick said:

“Drunk as I am I have not forgot the very good advice you gave me yesterday, colonel;—I say—I say—what was I saying?”—upon which he flounced into a chair in a way between a sitting down and a tumble, and Barret observed, loud enough for him to hear, that “they had overdone him.”

“I can’t distinguish a club from a spade,” said Frederick, continuing to mutter half as it were to himself, “no, nor a di’mond from a heart, nor a five from a seven, not I, as I was saying—”

Upon which they left him talking to himself, and all sat down to play.

Frederick, no longer pressed to take cards, arose, and placing himself behind the young nobleman’s chair, detected one at his table in a little sleight of hand who was Barret’s partner in a game at whist. He waited a little, and saw it repeated at a very important point of the game, and the young nobleman, who, though he was playing for crowns, had betted hundreds, upon the game being ended, gave Colonel Barret a check on his banker for a thousand pounds.

Frederick then took Barret aside, who was aston-

The History of Mr. John Decastro

ished to find him got sober on a sudden, and told him if the check were not instantly returned to the young nobleman, he would certainly tell him what sort of folks he had played at cards with. Barret put on a strange face, and stood it out at first for the honour of his partner, but soon found it would not do, for, finding Barret still to hold back, Frederick took him aside and told him what he had seen, and would swear to, if need were. Barret, fearing a disturbance, for he knew what had been done as well as Frederick, instantly returned the check to the young nobleman, and said to Frederick that he could not be expected to be answerable for people's principles, but that the gentleman, whose partner he had the honour to be, was a man of fashion and fortune, and received on the best foot by all the west end of the town.

CHAPTER XX

Frederick leaves England in a great fright—Three sweet young Ladies introduced—Cupid bends his Bow, and Love affairs begin.—*The pen sometimes in the hands of Old Comical, and sometimes in the hands of the Solid Gentleman.*

PEOPLE stare sometimes, and gape, in order to see the better—and, certainly, the more holes a man opens, the more light he must needs let into his body: and that is the reason why, when folks stare, they gape with their mouths wide open at the same time: Now the young nobleman, that came, like a cushion, under the bottom of the last chapter, opened his eyes and his mouth at the sight of his check upon his banker for one thousand pounds coming back again from the colonel. It sometimes happens upon a sudden surprise, that the first thing a man does is to fall into a great passion.

“What the devil d’ye mean, sir,” said the young nobleman to the colonel, “what the devil d’ye mean by returning me my check? D’ye think I mean to give you a false piece of paper?”

The colonel hesitated and said, something had happened in the course of the last rubber which had disannulled the whole thing, and though his lordship had not observed it, he conceived himself, nevertheless, in honour bound to return him his money; upon which his lordship made his bow and left the room with a very exalted opinion of the colonel’s honour.

The History of Mr. John Decastro

Frederick, notwithstanding the gay scenes in which he had been engaged for four or five months in the gayest city in the world, and at the same time the most innocent, felt his brother's murder lie like a coal of fire on his heart; for the false intelligence which his mistress had communicated, had, as yet, met with no contradiction. It was natural enough in him to suppose that the hounds were out and beating for him, and though they had not as yet got scent of him, they might at a time when he was the least prepared to make his escape, and he might come, without any other accident, except breaking his neck, to the gallows; and, though no inquiries had been made in London after him, he took it into his head that he was in great danger, by the help of his conscience and some trivial circumstances which he construed in the wrong way. Feeling himself therefore not quite so much at his ease in England as he thought he might be in some other place, he told his friend the colonel that he had intelligence of the man whom he fought being dead of his wounds, and had come to a determination to leave England as soon as possible, for he was sure, from some very aggravating circumstances in his case, store of which he invented and put off upon the colonel for truths, that if he were taken he should most assuredly be hanged for murder. Now it so fell out that the colonel too, for some reasons, was not best pleased with his situation in England just at that time, so Frederick and the colonel, with another friend, whose name was Dogger, took ship and went to France, and Frederick's mistress went with them to Paris to see the fashions.

When folks have any great news to tell, and their friends happen to be at a great distance, they will be

The History of Mr. John Decastro

apt sometimes to write letters. Now it came to pass that Dr. Remnant and the philosopher were both of one mind in this matter, and took it into their heads that their thoughts might be for once worth a penny, so down sat the philosopher at Merton, and down sat Dr. Remnant at Christchurch college with pen in hand to tell the good people in the north what a thing had been done in the University.—Why not sat down? The adverb is here put before the verb, reader, for the greater nobility of period.—The same post brought both their letters to the castle, and the very moment the contents were read, Mr. and Mrs. Decastro felt as if their hearts were dipped in cold water.

Now it so fell out that Old Comical had just drawn ten quarters of oats from Old Crab's farm to the castle stables for Mr. Decastro's horses, and was going home with the empty waggon, when Mr. Decastro called to him out of the castle window with a loud voice, "John Mathers! John Mathers! John Mathers!" whereupon Old Comical answered and said, "Here am I."

"Shoot off one of your horses, John," quoth the impatient gentleman, "and gallop away to the farm, and tell my brother he must come to us this moment!"

Whereupon Old Comical laid hold upon his waistband with both his hands, and, pulling up his breeches, jumped upon Nimrod, the fore horse of his team, and off he went upon a full gallop to Old Crab's farm.

Now the reason why Old Comical took Nimrod,* was because the horse had taken a dose of physic that

* *Scholium.—Took Nimrod.*]—We suspect an hiatus in this place: it is great neglect in our historians else, not to tell us in whose care Old Comical left his waggon and the rest of his team.

The History of Mr. John Decastro

morning, and wisely, for, being in haste, he wanted something to move his horse.

The Solid Gentleman took the pen out of Old Comical's hand at this time, and proceeded as followeth:—

Mr. Bartholomew Decastro was at his dinner when honest John Mathers came in with the message. He arose, however, immediately, and made the best of his way to the castle, and the dreadful news from Oxford was laid before him. Old Crab was reading the letters, when the butler brought a large parcel into the room directed to Mr. Decastro.

If people are very much engaged in one thing, another may go a-begging: the parcel lay some time without any notice being had of it, when Mrs. Decastro, glancing her eye upon the direction, saw it to be the handwriting of Acerbus, commonly called the philosopher. She cut the strings of the parcel, and, taking off the cover, found it to contain a great book with two round holes bored, or punched, in one of the lids of it. Old Crab opened the book, which proved to be a large folio edition of Plato's works, and following the two holes which were made in it, leaf by leaf, came at last to the two bullets which had been shot and lodged in the middle of the book. This matter had, of course, been fully explained in the letters; but it added very much to the shock which this dreadful intelligence had given to Mr. and Mrs. Decastro. Poor Mrs. Decastro wept sadly, and Mr. Decastro and his brother held a long talk upon this terrible matter. What courses they resolved upon in regard to Frederick will be seen hereafter.

(Old Comical at work again.)—When a man sits down to dinner and casts his eyes all over the table

The History of Mr. John Decastro

without finding one dish to his liking, what tongue, what pen, what pencil can describe the feelings of his soul! poor soul! poor soul! poor soul!—What! no fish to-day? no, sir, no fish to be got in the market:—the devil take the market!—The devil take the book, cry the ladies, for we can find no love in it: what can we do with the ladies? they are never content unless they get to kissing, liquorish toads!—more shame for them! Shame!—what shame? kissing was the very end for which they were made, and, pray, what thing was ever made to any shameful end? Folks may be more nice than wise: if people would take shame in the right place it would be much better for them, be a little better economists of their blushes, and not blush so much in wrong places as not to have so much as one blush left for the right!

What! no shame in kissing? no—no shame at all, if you kiss your husband, madam, or your lover whom you mean to make one: but if you kiss another woman's husband, which you do every day without blushing at all about the matter, that is a very great shame, and to our grief we have not got such a kiss as that in all our history. A word in your ear, madam—you cannot kiss too much in the right place, nor too little in the wrong.

Now as for blushing, a lady may blush without being ashamed; nay, she may even be ashamed to blush, and blush for fear she should be seen to blush, for some blushes are very impudent things. Now as kissing and blushing are coming, it falls in this place to say, that folks may kiss and no harm done, yea, and blush too, and yet be very modest: and this, because an archbishop may be reading our history to the ladies, and George, all on a sudden, catch Julia by her waist and

The History of Mr. John Decastro

kiss her—and what of that, if Old Crab hath published the banns of marriage between them? This is a very fiery subject, reader; it is enough to burn a man's pen in his hand: Kempius—the man was surely made of ice—Kempius put every sort of kiss that ever was, or could be, given in the world, into a book, and wrote at least eight hundred pages upon this branch of electricity:—a very grave man—his picture is put in the front of his book, and his band, and his beard together, hang down to his smallclothes. To return to blushing—a bad man will blush as much at being detected by his friends in doing a good thing, as a good man if he be detected in doing a bad one. Adzooks! when things are sorted, how many will be found virtuous and innocent for which we have been heartily ashamed, how many vicious and infamous for which we have applauded ourselves and others!

Old Crab, as we believe we have already stated in some one of our foregoing pages, had ten children, of which death took the nine parts and left the tenth for the poor clergyman; it was Julia, a beautiful young woman, who was now grown to be eighteen years of age. She was a fair girl with blue eyes, rosy face, and flaxen hair. Bred in rustic innocence, Julia milked Old Crab's cows, and had the care of his dairy, at Oaken Grove farm.

Now, reader, such a thing hath been known under the sun, that where there has been only one child both father and mother must needs join their forces to be the ruin of it, and, let its disposition be what it may, will not hold their hands until they have utterly spoiled it—but such was not the case with Julia, who was made of the very best wax, and shone as bright as a candle

The History of Mr. John Decastro

in a silver save-all: the most inveterate parents could scarce have spoiled her if they would, unless, when she wanted the snuffers, thy had put an extinguisher over her head and ears. This being the case, what might be expected from such a father as Old Crab, and so excellent a mother as Mrs. B. Decastro? Why a thing pushed as near to perfection as a thing kneaded out of the four frail elements could be.

But we must be economists, for, having two other very nice girls to bring forward, if we lay out all upon Julia, we shall have not a penny left to spend upon the magnificent Genevieve, or the charming Lady Charlotte Orby: but having just announced their names by way of introduction to the reader, we shall go on with Julia a little way, and come to them afterwards. Nota bene, fair reader, we have not been to heaven and brought down a nest of angels with us to put all the female excellence and beauty in the world out of countenance—no such thing—Julia, for instance, is no more than what you may be if you please, if you are a beauty; indeed it is not impossible for you to excel her in her better part, if you are not, for beauty stands very much in a woman's way, and is no little impediment to her improvement.

No, you will find no lady in this our history without a fault: women in romances are usually angels with their wings cut off—no—no such things here. Julia, you will find, is a very good girl, and very handsome, but we must be content with that for the present. George Grove was, it seems, very much in love with her; but as she was bred low, and, what was worse, was low in pocket too, his rich friends could not be brought to be of his mind.

The History of Mr. John Decastro

George was an intimate friend of Acerbus the philosopher, was a brother collegian, and they always came home together at the vacations; and, although he was very fond of his friend's company, he had another reason for coming to Oaken Grove; for as the way to it lay near Old Crab's farm-house, and indeed ran through some of his meadows, he very often found Julia, by accident perhaps, in it or near it, frequently with her milk-pail on her arm. For whether the grass was sweeter which grew near the road, or whether the trees which grew by the side of it afforded a more pleasant shade, or for what other reason, the cows were always seen to graze and shelter there rather than anywhere else, and when Julia went a-milking she must go where the cows were to be found, she could not help that.

So it happened that she was within a little distance of the said road almost every morning and every evening, and that too, which was a little strange, more especially during the vacations; but this may be accounted for, the cows must know where the best grass was to be had during the vacations. And so by this odd accident it was impossible for George to take an evening walk on purpose to see his friend without stumbling over Julia, who lay so much in his way, and all the fault of the cows, that got directly into George's path whether Julia would or not, and she must milk them where she could find them, for her mother would have been angry with her, and her father too, if she had come home with an empty pail, and said she was afraid to milk the cows because they had got close to the road side. As for George he was forced to come that way for there was no other, and he could not help seeing the pretty Julia, because he had two very fine

eyes, and could see Julia a long way off; but there was no need to strain his eyes, for he always knew well enough where to find her, and when she heard his foot she would look round, and who could help it when a footstep is heard behind one?

Now it so fell out, one fine summer evening, as George was walking along in great haste to see his friend, and indeed he had been invited by Mr. and Mrs. Decastro to come and drink tea at the castle, for they were very fond of George, and so he was forced to go, it so fell out, as we were a-saying, that on the said fine summer eve, as he was taking the said walk, being invited as aforesaid, that just as he came to a broad-headed oak he espied Julia sitting under it upon her milking-stool, for she had milked the cows some time, to rest herself perhaps, close to the roadside. People want a little rest after fatigue, and more especially the fatigue of milking, so there was nothing unnatural in Julia's wanting a little rest after the same; so taking her milking-stool, and getting under a tree close to the roadside, she sat down upon it out of the sun, for the sun was hot, and a shady tree close to the roadside was very agreeable—now George, out of fun perhaps, stole up to the tree upon the turf, which kept his approach a secret, for it made no noise, and as Julia's back was towards him she knew nothing at all about the matter—not she—how should she, unless she could have seen behind her? and what a pity it is Nature had not made some such provision for the ladies, falling in the way as they do of such dangerous animals! So far indeed their employments are always so innocent that drop upon a lady whenever one will she is never doing anything to be ashamed of; that is not insinuated, but a

The History of Mr. John Decastro

man may come softly behind her and catch her by the waist, which is a very shocking thing, and may bring great mischief, more especially if she happen to be fond of him, for that makes matters ten times worse.

This was just the case with Julia, see what a sad disaster came of it:—she had a taste for drawing likenesses, and had got her pencil and a bit of skin in her hands, and took it into her head to try her skill upon George Grove, which was very idle, when she should have carried her milk home and set it in pans for creaming. Now it came to pass that George, who stood under the body of the tree close behind her, poked out his nose over her shoulder as she sat taking the aforesaid liberties with his person, to see what she was piddling about, and casting his eyes upon Julia's skin saw his own image on it, and knew it in a moment: and if he had not known his own body when he saw it, Julia had got such a trick of talking to herself—will the ladies' tongues never lie quiet in their mouths?—Julia had got such a trick of talking to herself that she would soon have told him what charming youth her fingers were making so free with.

“O fie!” said she, rubbing out a limb, “Mr. George Grove has a prettier leg than that a great deal! Good gracious, what a mouth I have made him; I vow and declare his lips are the sweetest part of his face! heigh-ho for the heart ache! and heigh-ho for a husband to cure it!—these bits of things are no more like Mr. George Grove's delicious eyes, than two holes in an old wall are like them! O dear! I am afraid I am a very wicked thing, for I never looked at Mr. George Grove's eyes in my life but I always wanted to kiss them!”

George could stand his ground no longer, and some may think it a little marvellous that he could so long, but leaped from behind the tree, for he had heard all she said, and caught Julia in his arms, who was darting away, and she sunk upon his bosom just for all the world as if she had fainted away upon it!—Now all this comes of unguarded moments, and folks not caring to examine their ground before they lay themselves open in such a shocking manner. Faint away! she be hanged! she took care to keep all her senses about her, and she acted with great prudence while she was in the arms of the man she loved.

Enough and to spare had already passed between George and Julia to tell each other what was the matter with both, but George had not declared his passion for the beautiful milk-maid before this evening, which he now did while he had such a good opportunity to press her upon the subject: what a patient creature a woman is, when the man she likes gets hold of her! George asked her leave ten times over to make his love known to her father and mother. Perhaps she liked to hear him repeat the solicitation and some kind things that came along with it, for she was silent just as if she could not talk to George as well as to herself.

“Give me a smile, Julia,” said he, looking into her face, “if you consent.”

She could hold no longer, but dropt her soft blue eyes upon a cowslip that grew at her feet and smiled. Old Crab, who had come to look for Julia, having outstaid her usual time, walked behind the tree without being seen, as was like enough, for the lovers were so much engaged that he had scarce been observed if he had galloped to the oak on horseback, heard and saw

The History of Mr. John Decastro

all that passed, and how could he choose as he stood close behind them?

Julia presently arose and took her pail, and said, she must begone, or her father might come to look for her, and she thought she should die if he came and found them together; so George carried her pail for her to the first stile, for she was afraid to let him come too near the house for fear he should be seen with her, and took his leave.

Old Crab kept his eyes upon them till they parted, and then made the best of his way to Hindermark, took George's father aside, and imparted his discovery to him:

“Master Grove,” quoth he, “your son is in love with my wench—I came just now into the milk-house grounds to see what kept the jade so long a-milking, and found them sitting together under the great oak, as it is called, and hiding myself behind the body of the tree I heard your son make his proposals to her. Now look you, Master Grove, to be plain with you, I have no objection to your son George, he is a good lad and always was, but I have to his great expectations:—he is your only son and will come in for great possessions; my girl is a poor wench, and, if any marry her, a man must be content to find no more than a thimble, a housewife, and a few halfpence in her pocket; so, look you, master Grove, if you like the thing should go on, well and good, if not, you look to your son, and I'll look to my daughter.”

Upon which Old Crab walked home, told his wife the story, and said that he had reason to think George's father was not best pleased at the news. Upon which he took his wench, as he called her, into his study

and gave her as much good advice as could come in an hour's talking.

Poor Julia was sadly frightened when she found that her father knew everything, and as much astonished at his knowledge, for how he could come by it she could not think for her life: she saw that he had come by it, however, and the worst of it too, so she made no scruple to answer all his questions but one, and that was, if she were in love with George? for when her father asked her that, she was silent, and fell a-crying.

Poor Julia! she had seen so much of George, and so many little tendernesses and fond things had passed between them before he declared his love, that he had long ago broken into her bosom, a thief! and stolen her heart out of it. Old Crab saw well enough how matters stood with her, and fell to admonish her to get the better of her attachment to one so much her superior in fortune; for, although George's father said little, he, from that little, could easily collect his mind upon the thing; and though she were come of as good a family as George, no matter for that, for money put in all the difference. He was much pleased with the artless innocence with which Julia answered all the questions put to her, and her promises to do everything which her papa and mamma should bid her do, and, calling her a good wench, said, she might go to her work: and so she did, and cried till it was time to go a-milking.

As soon as Old Crab left Hindermark Mr. Grove took his son into the garden, questioned him where he had been and what he had been doing that evening? He said he had drank tea at Oaken Grove with his friend Acerbus.

The History of Mr. John Decastro

“Who were at the castle?” said Mr. Grove.

George said that there were no visitors there but himself.

“Tell me the names of everybody you have seen this evening,” said Mr. Grove.

George wondered a little at a question which he had never been asked upon a like occasion, for he frequently dined and drank tea at the castle without being asked any questions at all:—he said, Mr. and Mrs. Decastro, Miss De Roma, Acerbus, and his aunt, were the only persons whom he had met at the castle.

Did he meet anybody on his walk?

“Dear sir,” said George, “I cannot think why you are so particular—yes, I met several persons on my walk to the castle.”

“Who were they?”

“Why,” said George, “I met Mr. Decastro’s park-keeper, one of the game-keepers, the butler with a basket of mushrooms, and Miss De Roma’s maid.”

“Anybody else?”

George hesitated, and said, “Yes, I believe I did—but why do you ask, sir?”

“No matter,” whispered Mr. Grove—“there is one person whom I know you met, whose name you have not said.”

George changed colour a little, and replied, “O dear, yes, I met Miss Julia—I well remember now, with her milk-pail on her arm—have you seen her this evening, or how came you to know that I met her?”

“No,” said Mr. Grove, “I have not seen her this evening, but I know very well that you have seen her, George, and it is a wonder that you did not recollect it before.”

The History of Mr. John Decastro

“Dear sir,” said George, “one cannot call to mind in a moment what indifferent persons one meets on a walk, especially when one does not expect to be asked to give such a minute account.”

“Indifferent persons!” said Mr. Grove; “one may not recollect indifferent persons in a moment, but persons not indifferent, but engaging, one does not so easily forget.”

“Engaging, sir!” said George, “what can you mean by engaging?”

“Why,” said Mr. Grove in a whisper, “is it possible one should meet on one’s walk such a beautiful girl as Miss Julia Decastro, with her milk-pail on her arm, and all her rustic charms about her, and sooner recollect having met a game-keeper, or—a park-keeper, or—a lady’s maid—than such a lovely young woman? You must be made of stone, George.”

“No, indeed, sir, I am not made of stone,” said he with a deep blush.

“Indeed, sir, I don’t think you are,” quoth Mr. Grove, “or, if you were, I think your stone must all be melted when you sit, and talk with Julia, and make love to her under the great oak, George.”

“I make love to Julia!” said George in a great flutter—“who ever could tell you such a thing, sir? I am sure, sir—I am sure, sir—hem, hem—I am sure, sir, I don’t know what great oak you mean, sir—there are a great many great oaks in Mr. Decastro’s grounds.”

“Yes,” said Mr. Grove, “you must have made a great deal of love if you have made love under them all, George.”

Poor George was so confounded that he hardly knew where he was, or what he said. Upon this Mr. Grove

The History of Mr. John Decastro

made George sit by him on a garden seat, and, putting his mouth close to his son's ear, communicated a whisper into it that lasted two hours: the sum of which was, that such a poor girl as Julia was by no means a fit match for one of his expectations; to her family there could lie no objection, being related to very many great folks, but as her father was no more than a rack-rent tenant under his brother, and had nothing which he could call his own besides his little savings and his small living, the disparity was so great between him and Julia, whom he very much praised, that the connection could not be thought of: and farther, he had the daughter of a nobleman in his eye with whom he could be sure of an alliance, having already felt his ground upon it, but it were time and time enough yet for so very young a man to think about a wife, or his father for him. He made up his conclusion with very many praises on George, whom he called a very good and very dutiful child, and hoped he should find him continue so in this instance.

Upon which he arose and left George upon the garden seat wrapped in deep meditation: and there he would have sat all night if the butler had not been sent to call him in to supper.

George arose early the next morning, and as his father had not laid any special injunctions on him which way he were to walk, he took it into his head to make the best of his way to the cow-pastures, where, early as he was, he found Julia had milked half a dozen cows and carried home almost as many pails of milk before he got there. The cow which she happened to be milking when George came into the grounds, for Julia saw him, by some accident, the moment he came to the

stile, would not stand to the pail, but for some reason or other, kept edging away until the old hussy had edged herself out of the sight of the house; it was too early in the morning for the flies to sting her, but, notwithstanding, whether Julia stuck pins into her, or for what other reason, one of the quietest milkers on the farm was very full of the fidgets that morning, and would not stand to be milked until she got among the trees, and Julia was fain to follow the old toad, with her pail in one hand, and her milking-stool on the other, until she came up to George Grove, and then she stood quiet enough, for he held a bough for her to browse while Julia milked her, and that was what she was running after: for George was very kind to the cows, and had use to kiss them and feed them while Julia was a milking.

Julia turned her face away when George came near to hide a pretty blush, and, luckily, Old Rose, the cow, was quiet all on a sudden, so she sat down and began to milk her. George then told her everything which had passed between himself and his father, and expressed his wonder how his father could have come to a knowledge of what was only known, as he thought, to themselves. Julia, having a good opportunity to hide her face in the cow's side as she was milking, told George that her father had, by some means or other, become acquainted with what passed between them the last time they met in the meadows, and she was apt to think that he had communicated what he knew to Mr. Grove. George had no doubt of the thing, having heard that Old Crab had been at Hindermark, but how he could know what he knew, surpassed every guess they could make.

Julia was now become more afraid to stay in the meadows than she used to be, so as soon as she had milked she hurried home, but not before she had been prevailed upon to meet George in the meadows at a less suspicious time of day, excusing her absence at home to carry some wood-strawberries to the castle, of which Mr. Decastro was very fond.

George waited some time at the appointed place, which was a little copse at the corner of a meadow, when Julia presently made her appearance, and they retired to a very secret place in the grove together. George took Julia's hand, and they sat down upon a bank of soft moss at the foot of a shady elm, which, like the lord of the place, had taken possession of a good circuit of ground, and kept the lesser shrubs at an awful distance. Now a long conversation took place between the lovers, full of innocence and simplicity, for they were both very young, and thought it a very odd thing that made them so fond of each other. Their talk ran much upon their mutual affection, and their duty to their parents, and great grief it was that it opposed their love. They both agreed that if they disobeyed their parents that they were sure to be very miserable, and though they could meet in the place where they sat, every day, they could never be happy when they knew that they should not be allowed to do so, if the thing were known. Fathers and mothers, and duty and obedience, fly, like moths, about Love's torch, and at last into it and get burned to death.

George and Julia came often to this place, but not at milking time, for fear of Old Crab; and if anything were like to prevent either from keeping the appointment a note was to be left for the other under a large

stone which George took out of a little brook which ran by the foot of the great elm. The castle tower clock now struck two, which gave Julia warning to get home in time for dinner, which would be in half an hour, and, after a little coyness, she permitted George to kiss her lips, and they parted.

We have run a little too far into this love affair in this chapter, but must stand our ground here to make good our promise at the beginning of it, and in order to it shall turn our style to Genevieve, and proceed to give some further account of her: and first of her fortune, a matter of prime importance, for, to do justice to the wisdom of the world, when a woman is first seen in it the first question that is asked is, "How much money is she worth?" In answer to which we have already said that her father left her all his property, for she was the only child that lived, and that amounted to a vast sum of money; which, by the careful government of Old Crab, her guardian, had bred like a rabbit. The Berkshire estate which, as it may be recollected, he bought of his brother for her use, was very improvable, and he had done so well in it as to add one-fourth part to its value; but he got little credit for his pains, inasmuch as he himself standing in reversion to all his niece's property, in case of her death under age, the world was so good as to say that he had one eye to himself and one to his ward.

"What the plague is the world to me," quoth Old Crab; "it can give me nothing that I want, and can take nothing that I care one farthing for away; I had rather be cursed than praised by what deserves rather to be cursed than praised; if there were no honest man to be damned, there would be no use for a set of rascals;

as long as I have their ill word they shall have my thanks."

But to return to Genevieve:—as few women ever had more money, so certainly few women ever wanted less: and, indeed, having fixed her affections on a very sensible young man, she fell into despair of ever getting an offer from him upon account of these her large possessions, and wished herself poor in order to save his credit in an offer. Genevieve was now nineteen years of age, and was archly called by Old Comical, from her size, a *great* beauty; she was, indeed, six feet high, but, at the same time, so very large as not to appear to be so tall, but her form was without a fault if her size were no fault. One of her most singular properties, very singular in a woman, and may be thought by some to be no beauty, was her prodigious strength. If the word incredible be put instead of prodigious, some, perhaps, will be better contented, and indeed we had been as glad to have passed the mention of it, and staked no credit on it, had not some passages in our history made such mention necessary. And if the wonderful examples of it soon to be recorded be disbelieved, we cannot help it, though, indeed, we cannot see what interest or advantage can come from telling untruths.

In regard to her beauty, we will not say that no woman was ever so handsome, we think we may safely say, however, none were ever more so. Her complexion was the finest of brunettes, her hair and eyes were as black as jet, her nose Grecian, lips full, and mouth beautifully formed, teeth very neatly set and very white, her eyes far apart, very bright and sparkling at times, at others suffused with a tender moisture which quenched their fires; when she was serious there was

a severe majesty in her countenance which occasioned a little too much awe, but when she smiled there was so much sweetness in it as no pencil, much less, perhaps, any pen can give an adequate idea of.

At the age of fifteen she was taken from school, and had gone annually to town with Mrs. Decastro and Mr. Grove's family, and this in obedience to her father's will and directions; she had been introduced to all places of fashionable resort in London; and to most, if not all, the families and houses of distinguished people. So much money and so much beauty could not fail of much notice; she soon had many lovers, and many offers, of which in their places due regard will be had. Genevieve was a woman of very strong passions, and, though much tamed and broken by good education, and laid under moral check, and timely restraint, by the excellent advice of her guardian, these wild horses of the soul would plunge and prance at times and break their harness.

She was much attached to the country, and always went to London against her will—an odd humour in such a young woman as Genevieve, who had so much shining stuff about her: and strange it was that so great a beauty cared so little to be seen. It might, however, in some sort be accounted for by her love of country amusements, and rustic occupations, one of which was working on her uncle's farm, to which her great strength was not ill suited; and, further, from her having fixed her affections on a young gentleman who resided altogether in the country: that, "further," some will say, has a stronger pull than all the rest pulling together: well, they that understand pulls ought to be judges.

No woman ever had so much beauty that made less pride of it; none ever attired herself to so much advantage with so little finery; none ever exerted herself so much against herself, and whether she held her beauty cheap because she had so much of it, cannot be said, but she set so little store by it as rather to put it, with her money, amongst her encumbrances than her advantages. Why so? because she was jealous of both, and thought her understanding between them could get no credit: give a woman money and beauty, and let her either do or say a foolish thing 'if she can.

This was a strange whim of Genevieve's, to fall out with those very things that never fail to bring every perfection of human nature along with them: but she had set her heart upon pleasing a philosopher; what odd things women take in their heads! she had set her heart upon pleasing a philosopher, and that was the reason why she ran mad.

But it was not altogether Genevieve's fault, for Old Crab had lent a helping hand to turn the woman's brains by putting a parcel of queer notions into her head that seldom or ever came into a woman's head before. She was certainly a woman of great accomplishment and elegance, and how could she be otherwise, bred at one of the best schools in town, and introduced by her aunt, Mrs. Decastro, into the first and best societies? what the devil had Old Crab to do with teaching a woman of fashion the Latin language? But it gave such a furtherance to a right understanding of the Italian, French and English, that Genevieve studied it with great assiduity.—If a woman of fashion cannot count her own fingers, what signifies that? Old Crab

The History of Mr. John Decastro

must needs teach his ward Genevieve arithmetic, and she took it into her head to be very fond of it, and no bill for any sort of work, or thing, came amiss to her; she could cast it as well as a tradesman, and better too, sometimes, as some found to their no little confusion. Old Crab would not let her alone yet; she had a very fine property both in land and money, and he must needs teach her how to take care of it, instruct her in the laws which concerned and protected it, and put her in a way to do that for herself which her sex are fain to call in a rogue of the other to do for them.

Here follows some account of Lady Charlotte Orby.— She was the only child of the Earl of Budemere, a school-fellow and intimate friend of Genevieve. None are intimate friends, some say, that are not of like principles; we shall take our advantage, however, of an exception to say, that it is just possible for some folks to be in the wrong; but they will shoot out their lips at us even then and tell us that there is no exception without an exception: what a slippery thing the tongue is!—No pains or expense had been spared in the education of the accomplished Lady Charlotte Orby—she was so polished that she had no one rough thing about her—no—nothing that the file or the chisel had not touched—she was a diamond of the first water: such a combination, such an harmony of graces rarely met in one woman: the gold lay thick upon her gingerbread: the best of everything had been picked out for her, and the question was not what an elegance cost, but where it might be had? The best masters of every art were called, and when they saw the beauty and excellence of the materials they went to work with great readiness,

as they soon found they were like enough to get credit for their pains.

Lady Charlotte had a very fine person, a superior intellect, and a beautiful face: but as the education of women takes little care of anything but the outside, that of Lady Charlotte, it is true, was made to shine, it had every ornament that could be crowded upon it; but the inside of this charming woman was left to shift for itself. She was a shrewd hussy and knew very well what she wanted when all her masters were discharged, and never paid a bill without putting it into the hands of her friend Genevieve to see if it were cast up rightly. She was extremely cunning, cool when others were warm, though herself of a warm constitution, could conceal her inclinations by making no secret of them,—which brought them into doubt. None knew where to lie in wait for her, she would fall into any toils to choose, for it was always her aim to pass herself off for a fool. She used to say that everybody did not know all the advantages of being a fool; and indeed the sense she had of her deficiencies was no mean part in her; some she supplied by her own industry and concealed others by telling what none could believe from her manner of telling, by which she put a good countenance upon asking for instruction; yes, a good face upon asking for instruction. When her education was finished, which cost her father upward of two thousand pounds, she could not count her own fingers twice together without making a false reckoning of it. She therefore found that she was much to seek for arithmetic, and if her friend Genevieve were not at hand to help her out, she was e'en forced to pay her bills and trust her creditors for their honesty; thus, not know-

ing if a bill were right or wrong, she never paid one with any satisfaction unless her friend, who was a good accomptant, was at her elbow.

“Jenny,” said she, “do teach me some accounts, or I shall be cheated and laughed at as long as I live.”

Genevieve agreed, and Lady Charlotte soon was made mistress of as much arithmetic as she was ever like to want, and when once she got hold of it she never lost it, for she was so fond of it that she was always a-summing. Her education cost upward of two thousand pounds, it is true, but she knew nothing about threading a needle, and the sly baggage picked out of Julia all she wanted in this way, and could make a gown, a cap or a petticoat, and scandal has not stuck to say that her ladyship could mend a stocking! She picked up a good deal of religion out of her uncle Old Crab, but she kept it a secret for fear of getting laughed at by some of her acquaintance.

Some country folks may ask what sort of school she could be put to not to be taught these things, and religion especially? School! why one of the best, to be sure, where such things are not expected, for how can people teach what they know nothing at all about themselves? Then she never went to church for fear of getting laughed at? Yes, she might do that without being thought religious, any who would be thought to have a taste for music and beautiful language may very well go to church, without being suspected of any queer notions. Lady Charlotte certainly went to a very high school, and lost no time in picking up a great deal of low cunning in it, by which she brought the very existence of the man whom she loved into danger. She was a sprightly one, and very fond of fun, trick, and

The History of Mr. John Decastro

merriment, but she not only kept all her secrets to herself, but even that of having any secrets at all to keep. Genevieve loved her with all her oddities, and would have loved her as well as she loved the pretty milk-maid Julia, if she had used her friend with a little more generosity. She had another fault, she looked very sharp after her money, and, though she had fifty thousand pounds in fortune, would make her own caps, gowns, and petticoats; she said there was not only great independence in it, but she best knew her own proportions. We are not sure if our readers will like her ladyship, more especially when we add that she was a first-rate beauty. She said she was glad that she was a beauty because she had a better chance to get the man she loved, and such a cunning baggage could scarcely miss of any, for she had a thousand kittenish tricks and artful wiles, and seldom failed to carry her point, when none knew where she was at work. But this shall content us for this chapter, so put your spectacles by, old lady, and we will give you another relish presently.

CHAPTER XXI

How Genevieve was introduced at Court—Some Account of her Lovers—One of which was Baron Rump, a fat man of great consequence because a great deal came behind him.

NOTWITHSTANDING the contempt in which the high and exalted mind of Mrs. Decastro held the gay world and all its pretty playthings, she duly paid an annual visit to London at the very time when everybody is there, being willing, it seemed, to double her hands upon it, have the credit of being above it, and enjoy it at the same time. Mr. Decastro was paying his wife some compliments one day, and, while he was oiling her ear, Old Crab came in.

“John,” quoth he, rising upon his toes and putting his hands into his breeches’ pockets as his manner was, “John,” quoth he, “what art at?”

“I was only casting up my wife’s good qualities, brother Bat,” said Mr. Decastro, “that’s all.”

“They are soon reckoned, John,” quoth Old Crab, “you’ll make no blunder there if you can count three.”

“She is a prize in the lottery,” said Mr. Decastro, “a very great prize. She has twenty thousand virtues, brother Bat.”

“Twenty thousand fools’ heads!” quoth Old Crab; “the woman is more like a lottery taken altogether; a little bit of paper stuck on a post holds all the prizes, but where the devil will they find a wall broad enough to hold all the blanks? Brother John,” quoth Old Crab, “thou art an ass.”

Mrs. Decastro, however, to give her her due, made a great merit of her temperance in gay matters, and always left London when she was tired of it, which is more than many fine ladies can do who get in and cannot get out again, and for this reason, viz., they are such precious things that folks get hold of them and lock them up, just as they do their jewels, and will not part with them for a trifle. No fear of locking up, however, in Mrs. Decastro's case, not but what she was a jewel—no—not but what she was a jewel, for Mr. Decastro allowed her a princely sum of money, the guineas chimed in Mrs. Decastro's pockets like bells in a belfry—rung a glorious peal—*noli me tangere*, quoth she to the constable!

She made her appearance in town again in a mode of splendour suitable to her husband's fortune and dignity, and, a saucy jade! went to Lady St. Clair's masquerade with a butter-basket in her hand; everybody had heard the story, and a great many wished her and her butter at the devil: she was as full of malice as a scorpion, and so had rather been stung by fifty than seen Mrs. Decastro blazing away again, like the sun without a cloud.

Ads-bobs! but we have forgot Genevieve; fathers and mothers get so fond of their daughters that they are never content until they show them to the king and queen, a gang of homely minxes not worth a beggar's looking on. Genevieve rose upon the court like the morning star in the forehead of the east; her aunt, Mrs. Decastro, introduced her there when she was but eighteen years of age. Now Genevieve, being the daughter of a Jew, put folks very much in mind of money, and not without good cause, for she had a

thundering pocket. It was more like a great hop-bag than anything else, and crammed with money, till it was ready to burst: her fortune was given out by Mrs. Decastro at one hundred thousand pounds, and no lie told, no, no lie told—her aunt was rather under the mark than over it.

Adrabbit it! how the men came about her! the very devil himself had no chance! The first cavalier who made his bows to her was the Honourable Mr. H., a young man bred in high life with a small fortune and large desires. Genevieve refused him, seeing that he had at least as many eyes fixed on her fortune as herself. Indeed she detected him in the thing, and gave him such a rebuke to his face that he quitted the room one day in no small confusion, and that was his death blow.

“Sir,” said she, showing him an intercepted letter, “my money in the funds, and my estate in Berkshire, shall not be my rivals in any one’s affections,” and, making Mr. H. a very low courtesy, she left him to his meditations.

“So, brother,” said Lord Delamere to Mr. H., “the thing is off between you and Miss De Roma?”

“Upon my soul,” said Mr. H., “I had cursed bad luck in that business.”

“A man may cast a die, then?” said his lordship.

“Cast as many as you will,” said Mr. H., “I shall see her no more; after what has happened I had as lief see the devil: go on and prosper, my lord, I have done with her.”

Whereupon his lordship made Genevieve his visit, bows and speeches, in vain, for she turned up her nose at all three, told his lordship that time was precious,

The History of Mr. John Decastro

and bade him not waste his upon her. Now his lordship stuck to her petticoats like a bur, but she was in no such sticking humour, forasmuch as the heat of his lordship's passion could not melt her wax, and so, as we were a-saying, she could not be brought to stick, or, to come back to the bur, for polite authors always take their leave of their metaphors and similes, seem sorry to part, and the like, and never kick them out of doors in a moment—now, as we are here alive, we have forgot what we were going to say about the bur! so good Mr. Bur, many thanks for coming in by way of simile, we hope your brothers and sisters are well, and wish you health and happiness.

Ahem—where the devil are we? O—we were talking about my lord—and Genevieve's petticoats, yes he stuck to them like a bur, until it came to pass one day that his lordship made a dash at Genevieve's hand, snapt at it, videlicet, as a dog snaps at a bit of raw meat, not that Genevieve's hand was like a bit of beef, no, we don't mean to say that, forasmuch as it was as white as the breast of a chicken,—his lordship made a dash at it, however, be that as it may, yes, made a dash at it, and open-mouthed too—and this in order to kiss it, sweet pretty little thing! But it came all on a sudden slap upon his lordship's face with so much force and rapture that it laid him at full length on the floor.

“I am astonished at your impertinence,” said Genevieve. “I am willing to hope, however, that you have got enough at my hands not to meddle with such dangerous things again.” Now a man in pain is apt to be a little out of humour; his lordship got up with a bloody nose and a sprained shoulder, and said, “that as far as the knock on the head went, so far he had

certainly to thank himself, but the next time he paid his addresses to a virago it should be his fault if he got his skull fractured."

Genevieve told him that the next time he came into her room she would take him up in the tongs and put him out at the window. Now there was something very odd in this, for most ladies love to feel a man's lips upon the backside of their hand, but Genevieve could not bear a man to touch her flesh. How strange that was! It was a little unnatural too: for she ought not to have boxed her lover's ears unless he had bit her fingers. His lordship, however, took no further notice of it, and, to tell you a secret, reader, he was very glad it was a woman that struck him, for if he had *turned to*, another blow, if it had fallen perpendicularly upon his pate, would have driven his lordship up to his head in the floor like a nail. Thus ended this matter, and it was well his lordship survived it.

The next that fell at Genevieve's feet was Colonel Barret, whose name the reader is already acquainted with, the same that went into France with Frederick, who, hearing of his lordship's overthrow, made a matter of courage, it would seem, as a soldier, to attack so warlike a lady: for what knocks one man down spurs up another's courage, in battle especially. To proceed, —the colonel was a handsome man, had a very martial air, elegant manners, and a good understanding, and was thought to be not very disagreeable to Genevieve, for she would talk with him at times, which, being a thing she would seldom do with young men in general, he began to count upon it, and, one day, when alone with her, was hardy enough to take the same liberty which had been fatal to Lord Delamere. Nothing so

The History of Mr. John Decastro

highly offended Genevieve as to have any the least liberty taken with her person. The colonel seized her hand and would have kissed it, when the powerful Genevieve took the colonel up, chair and all together, and dashed him on the floor with so much violence as to break the chair in pieces and bruise him sadly: he jumped up, however, and, hazarding all for the sake of revenge, caught Genevieve round her waist, and, in order to make it the sweeter, the colonel made a gallant push for her lips. Genevieve disengaged herself from him in a moment, and threw him on the floor with his head against the wainscot with such force as to stun him for some time.

Mrs. Decastro, hearing a terrible noise, came into the room in great haste, and found Genevieve with her gown torn, and the colonel sprawling at her feet! seeing him to recover, she left the room without speaking one word; indeed, she said, that she was in such a rage that she could not have spoken if she would.

As soon as the colonel arose, he gave Mrs. Decastro a satisfactory account of what had happened, and added, that, although he was to blame in the matter, he would make Genevieve rue the day in which she had given him such usage: and, leaving the room in great wrath, never repeated his visit.

After a servant had left the apartment, who had been called to wipe the colonel's blood out of the floor, for the poor gentleman bled sadly, Mrs. Decastro sent a message to her niece, and begged to speak with her.

"My dear niece," said she, "if you have any the least desire to get well married and settled in the world, this certainly is not the way to it, for no man will risk getting his bones broken for your sake, be your beauty or

The History of Mr. John Decastro

your fortune what they may: surely a man addressing a lady may take, or may even kiss her hand, it is in the lover's way of business, there is nothing indecent in it, custom bears him out in it, it is a sign of his gallantry, and if he meets with a frown it were much, but certainly it is not a crime, to be punished with bloody noses, or broken bones! My dearest niece, what man on earth do you think will ever dare, for the word is not too strong for my purpose, what man do you think will ever dare to marry a woman that gives such earnest as you have given Mr. Barret and Lord Delamere?"

"I am sorry," said she, "if I have offended you, my dear aunt, and am willing to beg your pardon on my knees, indeed I am, but I will never endure to be pawed over by these men, it makes me shudder, I cannot bear it, I think I could as soon let a spider, or a toad crawl upon me."

"But, my dearest niece," interrupted she, "if you wish to get married, you will see your account in treating all men with civility, or you will find to your cost, that you may deter, amongst the rest, the man whom you could be glad to choose perhaps, if you could get an offer. It is good policy in a young woman who has no mind to die an old maid, to part with any she may not like upon civil terms; for, if a man has nothing else of value about him, his good word amongst his own sex is no mean matter, niece, it may help you to the man of your heart when he finds, that if he asks you the question, he will, at all events, be treated with tenderness and feeling, if you cannot grant him any further favours. I need not say much to you, niece, upon the subject, you have too much good sense to need any more than a hint in this matter."

Genevieve looked very serious upon this, thanked her aunt very kindly for her good advice, and they retired to dress for a dinner party.

These encounters, as it were like, set people's tongues in motion, and when one told the thing to another it was asked, emphatically, if he had heard of "the battle?" Genevieve and her aunt dined that day at the house of a great person, where they met a great many fine folks, and as soon as they entered the room, "That's she," "There she is," "Here she comes," and other the like notes of admiration were pretty general on all hands.

Wheresoever Genevieve appeared the beauty and magnificence of her person attracted universal notice, but she was rather to be gazed and wondered at than to be loved, until one became acquainted with her. It was at the dinner party just named, that she met with Sir Thomas Horsefall, a baronet of good estate and family, who was the next that paid his addresses to Genevieve: for Mrs. Decastro so managed matters as to let it soon be known when, by the departure of one lover, room were made for another: and it was said by some, by way of scandal perhaps, that she wanted to get her niece married and out of her way, for, being still a fine woman herself, she was willing to be the sun in her own system, wherein such a luminary as Genevieve more than disputed that title with her.

Sir Thomas sat next Genevieve at dinner, and gave her to understand that he had heard so much of her beauty, that he got invited that day on purpose to be an eye-witness of it, and added, by way of a very fine thing, that public report, having done the best it could, was fain to leave the eye to help out the ear in the

matter: at which piece of eloquence Genevieve laughed so loud as to be heard from one end of the room to the other. This the baronet took for an encomium on his wit and parts, and, after another speech or two equally brilliant, which had the honour to be laughed at in like manner, he thought he had forelaid his ground, got introduced to her aunt upon it, and, after half a score bows and as many grins, broke his love to Mrs. Decastro; who, returning a courtesy for every bow, and a smile for every grin, said, that if her niece would be as willing to see him, as she should be happy in giving his suit every furtherance, his prospect was as good as any man could wish it. But when Sir Thomas was told, as befel in the course of the evening, how the colonel and his bones came off at his last visit, he began to weigh matters between a broken heart and a broken head, whether the one might not be an easier death than the other. But love is apt to blind people, he did not see all his danger, and in a few days mounted his coach-box and paid Genevieve a visit with a four-horse-coach-whip in his hand.

Mrs. Decastro had broken the matter to her niece, and upon Sir Thomas being announced, she walked into the room in a martial step and received Sir Thomas's grins and bows with as much gravity as possible. The baronet had certainly a very fine set of teeth, the best thing he had in his head, the wit to show them on all occasions excepted, which he did by an eternal grin that must have captivated Genevieve, or anybody else that loved grinning. After a little common-place, Mrs. Decastro left the room, whether she thought two might be better company than three, or did as she would have another, or was pressed by any little necessity, or

The History of Mr. John Decastro

thought there was one too many in it, or was frightened at the baronet with his mouth open, or for any, or none, or all of these reasons, or some other, she left the room, as it hath been said, and her niece and Sir Thomas to shift for themselves.

Now it came to pass that there was a deep silence for some length of time, whether the baronet had so many fine things to choose out of that he did not know to which to give first utterance, or whether he thought a matter of such importance as that on which he came introduced by a solemn pause might carry more dignity, or whether his tongue had a fit of the palsy, or his wit been struck with an apoplexy, all was silence, however, till Genevieve burst into a loud fit of laughter, which broke the same in that room and the next to it. The baronet then opened his mouth, and his case, and laid the disease of his bosom before Genevieve, and said, that he hoped she would pour the balm of her kindness into those smarting wounds which her piercing eyes had bored in his heart. Genevieve was in a laughing humour, and she fell into another fit that made her sides ache. She begged Sir Thomas's pardon, however, and said, that when a fit of laughter got hold of her it shook her whether she would or not, but where no disrespect was intended she hoped no offence would be taken, and then fell a-laughing again. Whereupon the baronet arose, and said, he would take a flourish round some of the squares and call again, and hoped to find her in a more serious humour.

Poor Sir Thomas never paid her a second visit, however, for following a whim he had to shine as a coachman, and taking his life into his own hands, he ran his carriage against a post, and broke his neck,

which made a great deal of merriment in the first circles.

The next that offered was a little black fiery man, like a grain of gunpowder, a member of parliament, of great eloquence, and some poetry, he had the voice of a giant and the body of a pigmy; and his nose came up to Genevieve's tucker. He always wore boots, because he had crooked legs, and his name, a long name for a short body, was Christopher Cocky, Esquire. He was very brisk and lively, and had an odd way of running round Genevieve, who, being such a large tall woman, when he spoke behind her, hardly knew where to find him. He certainly was not in twenty places at once, but he skipped about so quick that he was as near it as any man ever could be. He was as hot as fire, and Genevieve put him in a terrible passion once, when he skipt more than common, by telling him, that he put her in mind of a flea, and expected him to hop among her petticoats some day.

None could ever get Mr. Cocky to sit down, the member was always on his legs, which were so short and crooked that the legs of the chairs were as long again, and that was thought to be the reason why he would not sit on one. He made his advances in a copy of verses, wherein, to use his own phrase, Genevieve's virtues and beauties were embalmed for the admiration and use of posterity. Genevieve played the rogue with the little man, and entertained him and his passion, as he called it, for her own amusement, for she would sit and laugh at him for an hour together, as if she were at a puppet-show.

She mortally offended him one day, being in a great hurry to run to the window upon some account, when

The History of Mr. John Decastro

little Cocky skipt just in her way, and though, if she had had the presence of mind, she might have stepped over him, she took him, however, by the tail of his coat, which he always kept buttoned close to his body, and lifted him out of her way, which, by raising his skirts, exposed what little matter he had under them to all in the room, and made the ladies, there were half a dozen present, very merry.

Wherever he came little Cocky was a great holder forth, and would stand in the middle of the room and harangue the company. When he grew facetious Genevieve would steal up close behind him, and, peeping over little Cocky's head, fix her eyes upon his nose, which stood straight out of his countenance like a man's finger, and had a little wart upon its tip. This would set folks a-laughing, which little Cocky took to the credit of his wit and parts, until, directed by the eyes of the company, he looked up, and discovered the jest that entertained them all, to his no little mortification. Little Cocky had a long purse however, though he had short legs, and offered larger settlements than any who had yet proposed to Genevieve. Little Cocky was as black as a coal, and had so much beard that he shaved every thing on his face except his nose and his forehead.

What had been fatal to some other of Genevieve's lovers was fatal to poor little Cocky, for one day, notwithstanding recent examples, getting a little elevated by a couple of glasses of Madeira which he had taken with his sandwiches, O evil star! he took half a dozen skips across the carpet to Genevieve's chair, and making a very fine speech indeed, behind her back, clasped her neck as she sat, and gave her a kiss on it! She jumped up, boxed both his ears soundly, and put him

The History of Mr. John Decastro

fairly out of the room. Little Cocky was heard to swear a loud oath outside the door, and never came to see Genevieve afterwards.

The next season Genevieve came to town, which was the last time she came with her aunt, Baron Rump, a foreign nobleman, after showing much attention to her at public and other places, wrote her a letter. His mother, who was in England, and appeared in it with great splendour, made Mrs. Decastro a visit, and said that her son had felt a tender passion for her niece two or three years last past, but as no opportunity could be found for him to make it known to her upon account of the number and rapid succession of her admirers, truly many, but multiplied by public report into more, he had deferred to explain matters to her till then, when he hoped to find her disengaged, as he had heard she was, to receive his addresses. Mrs. Decastro made her best acknowledgments for the honour, and all that, and said that she had very good reasons to think that her niece's affections were, and had been some time, engaged, and that her son, highly sensible as she was of so much honour, had best not think any more of her niece. This, however, would not satisfy the old lady, who had her son's interest a great deal at heart, and she begged to speak herself to Genevieve on the subject.

Mrs. Decastro then showed the old lady into her niece's dressing-room, and left them together.

Genevieve paid the baron and his mother some handsome compliments, but begged to decline receiving him on the foot of a lover. The old lady hoped there might be nothing improper in expressing a wish to be satisfied in the reason why her son might not be received on that foot?

Genevieve said: "I will deal plainly with you and your son, madam, and think it best to declare at once that my heart is not my own, it is wholly another's, and I therefore conceive it to be doing any one a very great injury to lead your son to expect what can never be granted."

Upon which the old lady made Genevieve a compliment on her plain-dealing, and took her leave with a very low courtesy. But although the mother was satisfied, the son was not, who, after his mother had made her report, wrote a letter to Genevieve to ask her, after fifty apologies tending to show how his life and his happiness were engaged upon the thing, whether the person to whom her affections were united had actually come forward upon the matter?

Genevieve said, in answer, that he had not, and might not, but that made no difference in the case. She therefore begged him to desist to charge his hopes upon any the least thought of success.

Baron Rump was a large fat man, and had a protuberance to make one think him nicknamed; he begged to be allowed to come in person, as many things could not well be put into a letter, and he had many to say, to which, to deal fairly with the baron, Genevieve agreed, and he came accordingly. She insisted, however, though he dropt a hint to the contrary, that her aunt might remain in the room, and hear all he had to say, and he was a great talker. Finding that he could not have matters as he would, he e'en took them as he could, and made a declaration of one of the most ardent passions that ever came in broken English from a broken heart!

"He had confidence enough in himself," he said, "to

make the recovery of her affections a sure game, and gathered hopes upon it as a proof that she was susceptible of the tender passion, and counted upon his assiduities soon to disengage, and win her heart. If, however, after all, it could not be done, he took upon him so much as to say that he knew his rival, and was determined, at all events, to dispute such a noble prize with him."

Genevieve interrupted the haughty baron with saying, "That it was quite impossible that he should ever have seen the person to whom her affections were engaged, and if they were at that moment otherwise than so, he had given her such an earnest of his disposition, that she would pick a husband, if she wanted one, out of a slaughter-house, sooner than marry one of his turn."

This was spoken with one of Genevieve's majestic frowns that would have daunted a man of less courage than Baron Rump, who said, "that it was her noble spirit that held such charms for him, and a woman who wanted spirit wanted dignity."

"I suppose, sir," said she, "by disputing the prize you speak of, you mean to fight the man whom I choose to prefer to you, though by shooting his brains out, you miss your aim with me, which would be a most inevitable consequence."

That was his meaning, he said, and held it out that he knew the man, and in a few days actually sent a challenge to a Mr. Brown, who went to the Opera with Genevieve and her aunt, and handed them into and out of their carriage. Mr. Brown read the note with no small wonder, and said, in answer to it, "That there was certainly some great mistake, for, so far from his

being any rival with the baron in Miss de Roma's affections, that he should be married to another lady in few days!"

Upon the baron's calling on him, however, he had the ingenuity to pick a quarrel with Mr. Brown, and had the honour to be kicked out of doors. Upon a repetition of the challenge Mr. Brown refused to fight, and the baron met him one day in the street, called him a coward in the hearing of twenty, and pulled Mr. Brown by the nose; upon which Mr. Brown threw his coat and waistcoat into an orange shop, and gave the baron a very handsome thrashing. Upon demanding satisfaction by letter, Mr. Brown told him "that it seemed no easy matter to satisfy the baron, but he would do his best to thrash him better the first time he had the honour to meet with him again;" which occurred in a few days, and the baron got another drubbing, and, having kept his bed for a fortnight, felt himself perfectly satisfied.

Upon some remonstrating with Mr. Brown for refusing a challenge as the act of a coward, he said: "It was a bolder thing to refuse a challenge than to accept one, for it was fear that made men fight duels."

"How was that?" it was asked.

Mr. Brown said, "To do a wrong thing for fear of the world's opinion was the act of a coward."

It was not long after this that the jealous baron fixed upon another man, an acquaintance of Mrs. Decastro's, for his rival, who, unfortunately for Baron Rump, had not quite so much courage as Mr. Brown, for he turned out at a moment's warning, and shot the baron through the body. Luckily for the baron, he fell into skilful hands, the balls were extracted, (for the baron, being a

man not very easy to be satisfied, had received a brace from his antagonist's pistol, so he had no cause to complain), and he soon got well again; thinking that the balls, which had missed his heart, might strike the fair Genevieve in that tender part, and too, that wit and valour united might carry the lady, he took pen and ink and wrote her a flaming epistle upon it!—To which Genevieve made the following reply.

TO BARON RUMP, &c.

SIR: I AM this morning honoured with your letter; and, after my best thanks for the very fine things therein contained, beg to say, that it is a little unfortunate that the very means which your honour takes to recommend yourself to me, are the very ones, of all others, to set me against you. You set out with two challenges, and a duel, which are charged to my account. I am sorry, sir, you have such an opinion of my sex as to think that such things as these take any countenance from us. I could as soon fall in love with a man for getting kicked as shot at, and deem it much the least disgrace of the two, more especially as he is the challenger; and am quite of Mr. Brown's opinion, which is much talked of, that none but cowards fight duels, whatever you may urge to the contrary in your sublime epistle notwithstanding. So, sir, you see what ground you have gained on this head. After having flourished away upon your courage, you next advert to your rank and fortune; the luck seems to run against you, sir, a title which a man has not earned with his own hands is little else than calling of names; and the lives, and manners, of many who wear them have brought a title into as much disgrace as if it had been given to the common hangman! As to your fortune, it is no credit for a woman to marry into one, she had much better be poor and honest than run her reputation into the hazard of marrying a rich man for the sake of his money, as that

woman must do who marries Baron Rump. You next commend your fine parts, one would think your honour were on sale. If you and all your rare matters were put up at auction, however, all I can say is, that any might bid for such lumber for me. You go on to set forth, (your honour is certainly on sale,) that your temper is a very excellent one, I will not cheapen it because I know little of it, any further than the sending two challenges in the course of three weeks looks a little quarrelsome: but this you infer was to show your courage to your mistress, as you please to call me, and advance your suit as a lover! Depend upon it, my noble baron, if my heart was in my own hand, you and I should never agree, you are too fond of yourself for me, or any other, to get any reasonable share in your affections: and you make yourself out to be a man of such extraordinary parts, virtues, and merit, that a woman would have no chance for shining in the midst of such superior splendour.—No, my noble sir, I would never consent to be your wife, had I no other reasons than those just stated for refusing so much honour; but I again beg to say, that my affections are wholly engaged, and you had best give yourself no further trouble upon my account.

I have the honour to be, noble sir,

Your very humble servant,

GENEVIEVE DE ROMA.

CHAPTER XXII

Genevieve's Lovers Continued.

THIS saucy letter, as it were like, put Baron Rump into a terrible passion; and, what made matters worse, in order to see if there were not a compliment in it, he looked the word "lumber" out in an English dictionary. He then ran to his mother, for he put all his secrets into the old lady's hand, and told her, that his mistress used him like a dog.

"Dabby," said the old lady, the baron's name was Aminadab, "you are much to blame to give yourself any further trouble about Miss De Roma. Be advised by me and quit her for another; do what you will you can get nothing but scorn for your pains: a woman cannot look for a better proof of a man's affection for her than to venture his life, as you have done, for her sake. I took you to have a better spirit, Dabby, than to put up with so much contempt from any woman."

"Spirit!" quoth Baron Rump, "why, a barrel of water with one drop of brandy in it, would have more spirit than to put up with such a letter as this is! Look at the meaning and signification of the word Lumber here in the English dictionary—'cumbersome household stuff of little or no use'—is it not enough to make a man go mad? And look you here again, the meaning of the word 'stuff' is 'furniture, coarse cloth, kitchen stuff, dripping, mutton or beef fat,' look, mother, 'common grease:' see how I am abused! all

The History of Mr. John Decastro

this comes of my being a fat man, for 'fat,' you see here, in another part of this dictionary, means 'grease,' and here it goes on to say, that 'fat is a white oily sulphureous part of the blood'—and that is as much as to say that I am a sulphureous fellow!—I will not bear this—by heavens I'll be revenged!—You see what a devil of a word this 'lumber' is! we have not a word in our language that carries so much abuse in it!"

Upon that Baron Rump flung down the dictionary, and stamped about the room like a bedlamite.—After a turn or two, the baron said now his hand were in he were determined to know the worst of it, and again taking up the dictionary, the old lady caught him by the arm and begged of him to let the English dictionary alone, for if he went on to search for more meanings she did not know what might be the consequence; and as for Miss De Roma, she had used such language as to bring her beneath the notice of any gentleman. Upon which Baron Rump shut up the dictionary, and swore a great oath in his own tongue, that he would have no more to say to her, and he kept his word.

Genevieve was now in full reputation for a first-rate beauty, and her person had found its way into the several exhibitions, sometimes in one attitude, and sometimes in another; sometimes with, and sometimes without shoes and stockings. One painter took the liberty to pull off a great many of her clothes, and, in a very beautiful picture, had the face to show more of her person to the public than any had ever seen besides herself. One of her lovers bought the picture, however, and had the modesty to conceal his mistress's nakedness from the eye of the world. The painters are certainly a set of men who take more liberties with the

The History of Mr. John Decastro

ladies' shoes and stockings, gowns and petticoats, to go no further, than any else. Such freedoms, it is like, would not be suffered, if the ladies were not willing to take fair occasion to show as many beauties as they can, and will not quarrel with the painter for exposing any thing which they would be glad to show themselves if it were worth seeing; but clothes are come so much into fashion, since Eve began with her fig-leaf, a little spot has spread over half the female body, that a straight leg, if it were not for the painter, would no more be seen than a crooked one.

To return to Genevieve: the gay world had never many charms for her, though the general admiration she met withal were enough to have won the heart of many, and, it may be said, sensible women; for why may not a woman be pleased in pleasing others? But Genevieve really felt, what Mr. Decastro gave his wife credit for, to answer his own ends with her, a hearty contempt of the pomps and vanities of the world. She had long been used to hear on all sides when she came into company, "*Here she is,*" "*That is she,*" "*Here she comes,*" and the like notes of admiration, without receiving any injury, if the mortification be not one upon finding that a celebrated beauty rarely attracts a man of good sense. Some such indeed she knew; but found that they took pains to avoid her, and make room for beaux, fools, coxcombs, petit-maitres, and other the like rubbish of human nature. With an halo of such matter was this peerless beauty ever encompassed, at all public places especially; and we omit, for the sake of brevity, to name many who made proposals, were refused, and heard no more of. No woman ever admired more, or was better accomplished for, the con-

The History of Mr. John Decastro

versation of men of sense, but as the sun draws up fogs out of the mud, even so the radiance of Genevieve's beauty attracted a cloud of tawdry wretches out of the scum of the earth, that hung about her like mist that blots the sun out of heaven.

She grew alarmed at the reputation she was like to hazard of being pleased with what disgusted others, and having a bad taste, rolling, like a pig, amidst the mire of mankind, avoiding the conversation of men of sense and worth; and she found that some such suspicion had gone forth. She and her aunt dined one day at Dr. Masters's house, a reverend dean, and an old friend of Mr. Decastro's; where the goddess was not so much in her temple as in some other houses. The good dean had heard a great deal of Genevieve and had a wish to see her, so he invited her and Mrs. Decastro one day to dine with him at the deanery. She and her aunt, and a maiden sister of the dean's, were the only ladies who made their appearance at this reverend gentleman's table. His wife was laid down with the gout. A world of doctors with great wigs on their heads were there, and, among others, a handsome young clergyman, named Smith, much admired on the score of his virtues and learning. Genevieve and her aunt made their *entrée*, and casting their eyes around them, felt their blood run cold at the sight of so many great wigs on all hands. What all this hair has to do with religion is a matter of wonder, especially false hair, which must needs belong to the devil as all false things do. Genevieve fixed her bright eyes on this handsome young clergyman, who had not as yet run his head into a great wig, however a great wig might run in his head. She saw him stare at her, but presently to take his

The History of Mr. John Decastro

eyes off, and, though he had a fair opportunity of sitting next her, and she gave him one of her sweet glances to coax him to her side, she had the mortification to see him file off, and take a chair close by the old maid on the other side of the table. She felt this very sensibly, but took no notice. Mr. Smith was related to the dean, and he had introduced him to her.

At this reverend table, Genevieve seemed to be unusually alone, and actually sat silent for want of one to converse with her, after a little talk, and a glass of wine, with the good old dean. On each side of her sat two great wigs, full of powder and very terrible; and Genevieve looked at one, and then at the other, and was sure there must be a great deal in them if she knew how to get it out. The talk, as far as she could hear, ran upon very grave matters, which the Reverend Doctor Blow, who sat on her left, kept pretty much in his own hands, conversing directly across her nose with the Reverend Doctor Boarcole, who sat on her right. Now Doctor Boarcole was a little hard of hearing, and Doctor Blow was fain to lean toward him when he spoke, who, out of politeness, met him half way, which inclination on both parts brought their great wigs over Genevieve's face in such a manner as to cast her under a total eclipse of hair, during a great part of the time she sat at the table; for Doctor Blow and Doctor Boarcole presently fell into an argument upon the divine right of tithes, which waxed so warm that the two doctors, during the heat thereof, frequently gave Genevieve a brush on either cheek with the eaves of their wigs: which, mixing their white powder with her jetty locks on both sides, might induce a belief on one who knew nothing of the matter,

The History of Mr. John Decastro

that Genevieve had got kissed by both the doctors at once to keep her face steady. For the ladies have a trick of turning their faces away when they are kissed, a thing very well known to all doctors in divinity, who may wear great wigs to hide the ladies' blushes, else what use can they be of? Now if Doctor Blow had fixed his lips on one cheek, and Doctor Boarcole on the other, their wigs would have met over Genevieve's nose! No such fun for Genevieve, however; who, during the argument, came in for a very small share of attention.

It has been said, when there is a contest between two, nobody can long stand neuter, that is, without siding with one or the other of the combatants. Doctor Blow had cast his eyes twice on Genevieve, and Doctor Boarcole four times during the discussion, whereupon Doctor Boarcole was Genevieve's man, and she felt pleased whenever he gave Doctor Blow a shrewd turn. Whether her smiles of applause upon Doctor Boarcole invigorated the doctor's wit and genius, or the loss of them discouraged Doctor Blow, Doctor Boarcole certainly overturned Doctor Blow, who, converting his attention to a slice of plum-pudding and Madeira sauce, put such a great bit into his mouth at once as might very well make it a doubt whether it had been stopped by argument or by pudding.

The Solid Gentleman taketh the quill from out of Old Comical's wig, where he had stuck it, and fallen asleep.

The story which follows is a very sad one, and sets the fatal effects of female beauty in so strong a light as to make it a question whether it might not be better for the world if the fair sex came out at the hands of

The History of Mr. John Decastro

nature without any such dangerous embellishment. Or, if the women must needs come with so much ornament into the world, if beauty were put into safer hands than it too often is, and not to be given to such as are glad to do all the mischief they can with it. We do not mean, however, to insinuate, by this little preface to our story, that Genevieve ever committed any wilful murders with this terrible weapon or abused the power which nature gave her; by no means.

So little pains, indeed, did she take to make a conquest of poor Mr. Smith, that she had not a guess that any harm were done until he wrote to her. When the gentlemen who dined that day at the deanery came into the drawing-room, Genevieve still saw Mr. Smith avoided her, which made her a little anxious to engage him in conversation. She took an opportunity, in making way for a servant, to edge her chair up close to him. Poor Mr. Smith could not make his escape, for Mrs. Deborah Masters sat on the other side of him, with whom he was talking. Genevieve listened a little to their conversation and soon found room to put in a word, for she was a ready speaker, and, by degrees, drew Mr. Smith entirely to herself; but we must abridge this story, or it will run us too far: Be it known then that Genevieve made a conquest of Mr. Smith, who not only paid his addresses to a lady whom Genevieve knew, but matters had gone so far that the day was fixed for the marriage. Genevieve herself did not come off without a wound on her side, and she went so far as to say that if her affections had not been deeply engaged, she could have been glad to have chosen Mr. Smith for her husband; but she loved another too well to suffer much on her part. In the

course of a few days after she dined at Doctor Masters's house, she received a letter from Mr. Smith, full of wildness and extravagancies, and another from Miss May to whom he was engaged; the first we shall suppress out of tenderness to Mr. Smith, the last we shall give the reader.

THE LETTER WRITTEN BY MISS MAY TO GENEVIEVE.

MY DEAR MISS DE ROMA: I should not deserve the kind attention of so excellent a young man as Mr. Smith, if I had not a heart to pity him in his present situation. Before Mr. Smith saw you, my dear madam, Mr. Smith was mine, but he now is yours, your superior charms and merits have taken him from me, and that upon the eve of our nuptials. Knowing Mr. Smith as you do, I need not tell you how much regard I have for him; too much to see him in such a sad distracted state on my account; if I do not see him happy I shall never be so myself—I have told him this, and given up all my claims to him: you must add, that he has my leave to address you: I could not do so, lest this little act of generosity, as some may think it, might overcome him. I speak as if I knew you loved him as well as I do—it is impossible, if you have any feelings of a woman in you, but you must love him:—think not too highly of me for what I have done, it is done for my own sake, for I could never live long and see Mr. Smith miserable: tell him this, and add, that if he has any wish to prolong my life he must let me see him happy.

I remain, my dear madam,

Yours, &c.,

LOUISA MAY.

As soon as Genevieve had read this letter, she wept like a child; getting a little composed, she asked her aunt for her carriage, and paid Miss May a visit. Miss

The History of Mr. John Decastro

May received her with great kindness, which threw poor Genevieve into a sad fit of grief, and it was some time before she could get power to say a word. She began by telling her that she had no heart to lose, for it was already another's, or Mr. Smith was quite the kind of person to make the deepest impression upon her mind, so that she could take no merit in declaring that she would never see Mr. Smith again, begged by all means that their marriage might take place, and asked Miss May to give her leave to enclose her letter to Mr. Smith, for, she said, if any charm on earth could call her lover back to her that letter must do it. After much entreaty it was allowed; when Genevieve wrote the following note to Mr. Smith, and enclosed Miss May's letter.

TO THE REV. THOMAS SMITH.

SIR: I received your letter, which has given me much vexation: I have robbed a young woman of your heart, who well deserves even such a heart as yours, and could tear my unlucky face to pieces for having done so much mischief. If you knew me, sir, as well as you know Miss May, there could be but little harm done; my temper is not a good one, I am violent and fond of rule—you would be terrified if you knew what a bosom I have—what furious passions inhabit it; if you gave up your sweet Louisa, you would go distracted as soon as you found what an exchange you had made. For heaven's sake, sir, think not on me: what you now feel is the least of the matter; if you felt ten times as much, it would be a paradise compared to what you would feel if you had me: sooner than marry you, I would hang myself out of charity to you. I wish in my heart I had never seen you: marry your sweet Louisa, and it will be no little addition to your happiness to talk over your escape together: as to your letter

The History of Mr. John Decastro

it is full of downright falsities, everything you say of me is untrue; you are cheated, sir, by my cursed glaring outside—my beauty is my greatest misfortune. I could have been glad of you as a friend, and of your charming Louisa as an example to copy after; my beauty has deprived me of both, many thanks to it. Take notice, sir,—my affections are engaged; it may be of some use to tell you this; just such another young man as yourself has my whole heart, who, I am sure, has too much good sense ever to give such a termagant as I am any encouragement; but I will tear myself out of myself, but I will try everything to engage him! Read the enclosed letter, and if you do not fold your sweet Louisa to your heart, I wish you may marry such another as myself.

I am, sir, your humble servant,
GENEVIEVE DE ROMA.

Poor Mr. Smith, soon after the receipt of this note, married Miss May, but died of a broken heart in the second year after his marriage, and his sad Louisa soon followed him to his tomb, leaving an infant daughter to the care of their disconsolate parents.

Amongst others that paid their addresses to Genevieve, her cousin Frederick was one, and if she detested one man more than another, Frederick was he. This offer took place before he returned to Oxford the last time: we must give some particulars of it in this place. Frederick's attachment to Genevieve was no sudden thing. He fell in love with her while he was a schoolboy, and had often told her so, and she him in return, that there was no offensive reptile that crawled on the face of the earth that she felt so much disgust at the sight of.

Genevieve usually took up her abode at the castle, and this by the advice of Old Crab, who said, he did no see what such a woman, as she were like to be, had

to do in a farm-house. During the holidays and vacations, however, when Frederick was at home, she always went there to get out of Frederick's way, and told her guardian, Old Crab, her reason for coming; who said, Frederick was a good-for-nothing young dog, and it was his duty as her guardian to keep her at a distance. Finding Frederick one day in his house, he laid his stick upon his bones, and asked him how often he was to forbid him coming there? Acerbus, the philosopher, was Old Crab's favourite; as to Frederick, he always said he would come to the gallows, and the sooner he were hanged the better. Whatever faults Frederick might have, he was always constant in his attachment to Genevieve. By "constant," we do not mean to say that he forsook the rest of the sex for her sake, for he was extremely vicious, and, amongst other the like exploits, seduced one of Old Crab's maid servants, if seduced be not too light an expression, for the poor girl received so much injury from him that she died in consequence of it. This it was, amongst other inferior merits, that brought Old Crab's oaken towel and Frederick's bones together, as aforesaid, when he found him where he had forbidden him ever to come; for, after the affair just mentioned, Old Crab told him what he had to expect if he ever found him again in, or near, his premises.

We truly think that it would be doing Frederick much injustice to say, that he was not attached to Genevieve's person. Her money, however, had no little weight with him; and then, more especially, when his father stopt his allowance at the university; after which, with much difficulty, he got an interview with her by concealing himself in a ditch, and leaping upon

her, as she passed, like a tiger. What took place at this interview left an ulcer on Frederick's heart that rankled in it to the day of his death. He began by renewing his addresses to her in the most earnest manner. She told him that she would marry the common hangman sooner than she would him, and other the like scornful and provoking taunts. Frederick, finding all entreaties vain, vowed revenge on the spot. It was a lonely place where they met, close by a wood. He seized Genevieve round her waist, who, not expecting such an attack, was thrown to the ground; she was not likely long to lie there, however, nor had fallen, but for a bush that got between her legs—she soon disengaged herself at the expense of some of her clothes which were torn off her back, leaped from the ground, seized Frederick, who made a second attempt on her person, and flung him by main force into a muddy ditch, where he had certainly got suffocated if she had not pulled him out by one of his legs.

Frederick had now got enough of it, and sneaked home as black as if he had been dipt over head and ears in an ink-bottle. Old Crab met him on his way, and asked him how he came to be in such a pickle? but he hurried off without speaking one word, and so did Old Crab, for Frederick stunk of mud a man might have smelled him a mile. Getting over a gate into another enclosure, he saw Genevieve coming with the remains of her gown and a petticoat in her hand, her stockings torn and legs bleeding, and her bosom bare.

“Why, Jenny,” quoth Old Crab, “what the devil is the matter with you?”

Upon which she told her guardian the shocking attempt which Frederick had made on her person.

CHAPTER XXIII

Some Account of Lord Budemere's Matters—On what foot
Old Comical was received at the Castle—Mr. Decastro's
Pride.

No,—no love in this chapter, there was enough of that in the last. There will be a great deal presently, if the reader will have a little patience; but the ladies are so fond of sweet things that they can scarce keep their fingers out of a sugar dish! Now, it were a matter worth forty shillings, to tell them that a sweet thing coming now and then, comes all the sweeter for coming seldom. No lady or gentleman, whatever some may think, was ever made on purpose to live in a honey-pot. It is temperance that gives folks pleasure; run into excess and there's an end of it at once. Yes, sweet ladies, sweet lovers of the sweetest things, you miss the matter even in love itself by taking too much of it. If you could swallow a gallon of honey, a twentieth part is better than the whole: a kiss and away is better than all day; sweet is the lover's lip if rarely touched; too much is worse than grutch; it is the frugal use of pleasure that gives us pleasure. But who can comb all the errors out of people's heads? and what are errors but the vermin of the brains?

Now if Old Crab had combed Lord Budemere's head with a three-legged stool, and combed out brains and all, pouring milk, eggs and sugar in the place of them to serve for understanding, it would have altered his

lordship's intellects a world for the better, and his soul would have sat much more at her ease in the middle of a custard! As it was, the seat of his soul was the stool of repentance. What a confusion in his house! What a hunts'-up! no man knew who was cook and who was butler! Old Crab, as hath been said, took the chaos in hand to reduce things to order: there was a good ten years' work!

"What the devil have you been at," quoth Old Crab, "what in the devil's name have you been at? You must get into lodgings, you blockhead, and there lie, you and your wife together, until I can disembroil matters for you:" and it took Old Crab a world of pains, time, and labour to put his house to rights, aye, ten times the labour his brother John's cost him—so Mrs. Decastro occupied that in town, and the jackdaws that in the country, though they did not pay quite so much rent for it.

Cæsar, when he speaketh of himself in his Commentaries, most nobly putteth himself into the third person singular. Why may not Old Comical do the like after so great an example, and put himself in like number and person in Old Comical's Commentaries?—Mr. Decastro, heaven bless him! put Old Comical upon the foot of honour, always invited him to dine at his sumptuous table at the castle amongst the great folks, where he cracked his jokes, filled his belly, and talked to the lords and ladies. 'Squire Grove, as worthy a gentleman as ever walked between sized felt and neat's leather, always did the same.

"Ah Beauty," quoth Old Comical one day to Genevieve, for so he always called her Radiance, "who is to come in at last for all that's between your cap and pattens?"

The History of Mr. John Decastro

“Why, John,” said she, “what’s between my cap and pattens is the least of the matter, if the men could get hold of my money, the sooner I were thrown, cap and pattens, into the next ditch, the better, it is what they are all after; how is such a rich gipsy as I am to know who is sincere? and who will offer, after all, that is worth having, while all this money lies in my lap?”

“Ah, Beauty,” quoth Old Comical, as “music is the *caper-sauce* to a country-dance, so it is the chiming of the guineas in a woman’s apron that sets the men a prancing about her—who would look at an angel, if one of the seraphim came down from heaven with empty pockets?—A woman cannot get on in the water without money, she had as good be a fish without any fins in it, Beauty.”

“I hate the men,” said Genevieve; “they only court me because they want to put their hands into my pocket; hanging will never keep them honest as long as there is a man left to come to the gallows!”

“O fie! Beauty,” quoth Old Comical, “hang your great bag upon the devil’s horn, and if I will not marry you to-morrow kiss me till I pinch you!”

“O I hate warts, and your face is full of gooseberries; you shall hear further,” said she, “if I set my heart upon a cock turkey, and want a husband with a red face, that can spread his tail and strut.”

“Beauty!” quoth he.

“What now, Old Comical?” said she.

“Ha-ha!” quoth he, “how came you to think I spoke to you?”

“Why, you comical old toad, you always call me so,” said she.

“Well, I say, Beauty,—pull that bottle of Madeira

The History of Mr. John Decastro

this way (they were at dinner at the castle) and, come, let us have a touch at it together, and then, if you tumble under the table you can't blame me if I tumble after you; and let what will happen the fault will be all in the wine—but here it breaks again—it cannot be bad wine that brings good folks together, so come, Beauty, let's have t'other touch at it, and then I'll sing you one of my best ballads."

"None but an ass can have an ear for your music," said she.

"None but an Orpheus can attract the beasts," quoth Old Comical.

At table were the Earl and Countess of Budemere, Mr. and Mrs. Grove, Lord Thomas and his cousin Mr. L., Lady Charlotte Orby, Acerbus the Philosopher, Old Crab, Mrs. B. Decastro, George Grove, and Julia the pretty milk-maid. Hearing Old Comical quaver, Lord Thomas called for a song, whereupon Old Comical mounted a chair, for he had left his three-legged stool at the farm, and sung "My Lady Cannee,"* as it

*OLD COMICAL'S BALLAD.

"MY LADY CAN YE?"

Old Comical takes up a large Pair of Bellows.

I.

Poor Lady Bounce, my grandmother!
Ah she was troubled so in
Her maw with wind, that waters strong
She scarce knew what to throw in.

CHORUS.

My lady can ye?
My lady can ye?

The History of Mr. John Decastro

stands in the margin; and was made to sing it three times over. As soon as the laughing was done, for much laughter followed the ballad, "Brother John," quoth Old Crab, "you have got a house in

O my lady! ah my lady!
Now my lady can ye?

[*Old Comical puffs hard with the bellows after every
"Can ye."*]

II.

Deuce take the wind! quoth Lady Bounce,
Bring me a glass of water,
Hot-spic'd with noble cinnamon,
And clove to make it hotter.
My lady can ye?
My lady can ye? &c.

III.

While blasts of air in pockets shut
Within my bowels so rage,
Hot bricks and plates, quoth Lady Bounce,
And tiles, are chips in porrage!
My lady can ye?
My lady can ye? &c.

IV.

Bring me a glass of stiff Old Tom,
'Tis a choice wind exploder,
Makes colick'd stomachs snap and crack
As if charg'd with gun-powder!
My lady can ye?
My lady can ye? &c.

V.

Bring me a gill of scorched port-
Wine all on fire with spices,
Who would not for her ease get drunk,
A lady over nice is!

My lady can ye?
My lady can ye? &c.

The History of Mr. John Decastro

London again, folks say, what the devil is the matter now?"

"Matter! brother Bat, there's nothing the matter, it is Lord Budemere's house; I have hired it for my wife,

VI.

Now bring me pepper'd gingerbread
All burning like the devil,
'Tis good for rumbling grumbling winds,
That work the guts such evil!

My lady can ye?
My lady can ye? &c.

VII.

Marsh-mallows, bark, and chamomile,
Bring orange skins and nitre,
Bring caraway, and cinnabar
Of old a stouthearted wind fighter.

My lady can ye?
My lady can ye? &c.

VIII.

Bring me a pint of anniseed,
And now a pint of brandy,
Fire them and pour them flaming in,
Or I shall lay down and die!

My lady can ye?
My lady can ye? &c.

IX.

Bravo! at that, quoth Lady Bounce.
The wind that made me rave oh!
Begins to move!—it breaks! there! there!

[N. B. *The old lady breaketh the wind in this place.*]

Ah bravo! bravo! bravo!
My lady can ye?
My lady can ye?
Ah my lady! oh my lady!
Now my lady can ye.

[*Old Comical maketh frequent use of the bellows during this last staff.*]

The History of Mr. John Decastro

why should I beg or borrow when I can pay for the use of a thing? But I go no more to London, if you mean so, brother Bat."

"No," quoth Old Crab, "but your pride does, and that is a pity; why can't Madam Crincum Crankum be content in a lodging? or at Master Grove's house where she used to be? I have let the house for ten years, she must turn out."

"Let the house for ten years, brother Bat!"

"Let the house for ten years, brother Bat," quoth Old Crab, singing in his nose, "yes,—and your old hen sha'n't roost there, you may take my word for it. I don't see what the plague she has to do in London at all, feeding the common abscess of the land with her bad humours: the gathering is rank enough already, what need she add to the imposthume?*—She must turn out, brother John, I have let the house at a good rent for ten years, I tell ye, she must turn out—she has played the devil with the furniture already, with her confounded routs, there was scarce a chair that had not its bones broken by her last gang; what the plague she has to do to invite so many waggon loads of people at once, I can't think—she must turn out, I tell ye."

* Old Crab's comparison may have been suggested by William Cobbett's sobriquet for London "the Great Wen." To all sudden aggregations of dwellings, to a city or town, Cobbett applied the term "wen." London was therefore the Great Wen. "Have I not for twenty years," he asks, "been regretting the existence of these unnatural embossments; these white-swellings, these odious wens, produced by *Corruption* and engendering crime and misery and slavery? But what is to be the fate of the Great Wen of all,—the monster called by the silly coxcombs of the press, 'the metropolis of the empire'?" (*Rural Rides*, Dec. 4, 1821.)—*Editor's Note.*

“Well, well, brother Bat, if the house is let at a good rent for ten years that’s another matter,” said Mr. Decastro, “and I am very glad to hear it, I will not stand in the way of a better tenant.”

“Let for ten years!” said Lord Budemere, “I was in great hopes, sir, you could have made up my matters before that time.”

“Made up your matters!” quoth Old Crab, “’tis no such easy work—you set your estate on fire in fifty places, and expect me to stop the conflagration in a moment, I warrant; it were a fool’s question to ask how such a man can be such a fool! You will never be the man you were, you must not expect that, you can’t have your candle and burn your candle; the Parsmore estates and Rabbins farms are gone for ever; ten thousand a-year bled to death at that gash.”

“I expect cold news from that quarter,” said Lord Budemere; “but, sir, you have not said what you can allow me to live upon while matters are a-mending?”

“Six thousand pounds a-year,” quoth Old Crab; “there are only you and your wife and your daughter, six thousand a-year will find you in bread and cheese, I warrant, with only three heads in the cupboard.”

Lord Budemere raised his eyes to the ceiling and said he should be starved to death!

At that moment Old Comical burst into a loud laugh—just then a little ill-timed—Lord Budemere asked him what he laughed at? Old Comical humbly begged his lordship’s pardon, and said he could not help it—while Old Crab’s simile ran in his head, who had compared London to a great scab upon the face of the earth (Old Comical usually had a side slit to crawl out at)—“And there it is like to stick until the devil

The History of Mr. John Decastro

scratches it off," quoth Old Comical; "he will carry it home in his nail, some day."

"Aye," quoth Old Crab, "'tis a sign of foul blood in the land when it breaks out into such blotches."

"When it throws the humours out," quoth Old Comical, "'tis a sign of the strength of the constitution."

"Better in than out," quoth Old Crab, "as far as contagion goes, for vice is worse than the plague; the plague indeed may send now and then a soul to heaven, which vice never did since the devil laid his paws upon the world."

"Ah, master," quoth Old Comical, "tell it the people out of the pulpit next Sunday that the devil's a cat, and the world is a mouse, tell them how he plays with it, and tosses it from one claw to the other, now lets it go, and then hooks it back, and, if we don't take care to watch him, we shall all be snapt up at last."

"You would have more sense if you had less wit, John," quoth Old Crab; "you will have your jest if you go to the devil for it."

"That joke would be rather too far-fetched, master," quoth Old Comical; "for, look ye, master, I'll be—"

"You chattering scoundrel;" quoth Old Crab, "if you don't hold your tongue I'll throw you out at the window. In regard to this house, brother John," continued he, "it must be cleared as soon as it is possible, my tenant comes into it at Lady-day."

"Well, but, my good brother Bat," said Mr. Decastro, "where can I put my wife, she must have some place to receive her friends."

"The devil is in it," quoth Old Crab, "if she can't see friends enough at Master Grove's, he has a house

The History of Mr. John Decastro

as big as an hospital, he may let her a few rooms in it."

"O fie, Mr. Bartholomew Decastro," whispered Mr. Grove, laying his finger all along one side of his nose—"O fie, Mr. Bartholomew Decastro, do you suppose we should let lodgings? Mrs. Decastro never gives more than one party in a season, and she will do us a great favour if she will use our house and our servants when she wants them.

"We thank you as much as if we did, my friend," said Mr. Decastro: "why need we put you and your people to any trouble? money will find a house in town for my wife, money will find servants, money entertainments, money everything, and she shall have enough to let folks know whose wife she is too."

"What a cursed vice his pride is," roared Old Crab; "thou hast a thread of the old hank, brother John, and to get it once fairly out of thy fabric a man must e'en pull the old cloth all to pieces! Look you, brother John, as far as a man is proud he is sure to be a fool, to say no worse of him; suppose Master Grove lends your wife a room, or two, to give her friends a gossiping, and takes nothing for it, what needs that stir your monkey, brother John?"

"Why, the world will talk."

"Aye, there lies the very itch of it—can the tongue of the world lick a bear into shape? if it could, you had long since been a gentleman of very curious proportions!—They that are too proud to borrow may some day be glad to beg; take Master Grove's offer, and if your wife's gang break his chairs, or throw the tables at one another's head, which is like enough if they get to gambling, pay the damage, brother John,

if the constables can't keep the peace in the bear-garden. A house in town! the devil is in it if you have not had enough of houses in town! I'll unkenel your wife in this, however—I made the vermin bolt once and will again, I'll warrant her!—If she hangs back, out go all her bones at the first window—if I don't play Old Jezebel with her——”

“Well, well, brother Bat,” said Mr. Decastro, “she shall come out if you wish it, I am glad it is let, with all my heart.”

“Come out, aye!” quoth Old Crab; “what the plague has she to do to sit swelling in such a great house as that? I hate the sight of a great house, for my part; a man is sure either to find a great fool or a great scoundrel in it, nine times in ten: if a man knew his enemy he would throw himself neck and heels out of these great houses, as if they were on fire, to save himself from flames unquenchable! The devil keeps his shop and counter in them and takes men's souls in pay for every thing that hell imports—you noisy scoundrel,” quoth he to Old Comical, who kept the rest of the table in a peal of laughter, “a man had as good speak in a thunder-storm—silence, you wide-mouthed rascal!”

“Look ye, master,” quoth Old Comical; “you are the rector of the parish, and I am clerk thereof, put in authority under you—and, say whatever you please, it is my duty, in virtue to my office, to say Amen to it, that is all one as if a man should say ‘so be it.’—Now, Beauty says here,—but I should first of all tell you what wine she has drank—she drank ten glasses of his honour's neat Madeira at dinner to lay the meat even in her stomach, to keep the hogs and the poultry, the

neat and other horned cattle quiet in her bowels—that is as good as to say to drown them, for that is one way to keep such things quiet, or, as your honour very well knows, they might be for running about in her belly and breeding a disturbance amongst the jellies and the sillabubs, tarts, sausages, and puddings, and turn her stomach out at the window, as your honour, being rector of the parish, very well knows—very good—so Beauty drank ten glasses of his honour's neat Madeira at dinner for the purposes aforesaid, and to good end, forasmuch as I have not heard a hen cackle, a sheep bleat, an ox bellow, or a duck quack in her stomach—Adsbobs! she would have given them enough of it if any of them had spoken one word, for, as soon as she let the servants take away the residue of the dinner, which she did without biting or scratching, down went seventeen more glasses of rare old stuff, port, claret, burgundy, and champagne, to make sure work of it, and now her stomach is as quiet as Noah's Ark at midnight, with almost as great a variety of beasts and birds, and creeping things stowed in its hold!—Now, to pick up the thread of my discourse, Beauty says"—at that moment the ladies were retiring into the drawing-room, and Genevieve, turning round to Old Comical, flung half an orange, which she was sucking, slap-dash into his mouth, and stopped it up in a moment.

CHAPTER XXIV

More Love and more Kissing, and other the like savoury Meats—Of Genevieve and the Philosopher—Of George Grove and Julia—And other matters by way of a Tail to the Chapter.

LOVE pounceth upon a lady's heart with beak and talons like a vulture on a tender dove!—there is a pretty simile! it puts us in mind of Horace's red rag, his *purpureus pannus*, to begin with: adszooks! but we must not talk Latin to the ladies, they will say directly that it is something wicked, something that is not fit to eat—for it is impossible to speak one word with two meanings but they take the worst! but if we have not a care we shall burn our fingers in this fiery chapter—it is like to be very hot—the ladies had best skip it—or lay in store of lettuces and camphor before they get into it. In the first place here is Genevieve in flames, rolling on the grass under a monstrous weeping willow on the margin of the lake, torn like a mountain with imprisoned fires before the flame bursts forth.

“My dear Jenny,” said her friend Lady Charlotte Orby, who came behind her unawares, “what in the world ails you?”

Genevieve, in her fury, had torn her hat off and flung it from her to cool her head, and her coal-black hair, dishevelled, fell in wild disorder about her snowy bosom, any one who had seen her would have thought

The History of Mr. John Decastro

her a mad thing: willing to cool both ends, she had also kicked her shoes off her feet, and in this situation she lay sprawling under a tree when Lady Charlotte came suddenly upon her:

“My dear Jenny,” said she, “what in the world is the matter with you?”

“Who sent for you, you plague?” said Genevieve, “who called you?”

“Well,” said Lady Charlotte, “I will go away, Jenny; I am glad nothing’s the matter, but John Mathers ran to me in the shrubbery, and said that you were in a fit, and was afraid you would roll into the water.”

“That old devil is always lurking about,” said Genevieve: “but stay, Charlotte—I have something to tell you—sit down by me here on the grass: bless me! my feet are so ticklish I can scarce ever put my own shoes on without squealing,” said Genevieve, putting her shoes on.

“You are in a very odd sort of a way,” said Lady Charlotte; “what in the world ails you, Jenny?”

“O my dear Charlotte,” said Genevieve, “I am, I am in love, I am indeed! I wish the men had all been hanged before I was born!” saying which Genevieve hid her face in Lady Charlotte’s lap and fell a-crying.

“My dear Jenny,” said she, composing her jetty locks with her white fingers as [they lay scattered on her neck, “My dear Jenny, I am sure you have nothing to cry for—give but the least hint, and you may have any body—give him but one smile, and any man is your own.”

“Ah, Charlotte,” said Genevieve, “but the jackanapes that I am grown, I scarce know how, so fond of, is no common thing; he is so very sensible, so very good, so

The History of Mr. John Decastro

very handsome and so very odd—O Charlotte, Charlotte!—my heart feels as if it were a coal of fire within me!"

"My dearest Jenny," said Lady Charlotte, "don't talk so loud, you will bring people about you: will you make me still more your confidant, and tell me who it is that has so bewitched you?"

"O Charlotte, I cannot get his nasty name out of my mouth—I cannot tell you—I cannot get courage—but I will tell you before I tell any body else; you shall know first—you shall indeed. O, I could tear him to pieces, as folks have torn tyrants oftentimes, for seizing thus upon the empire of my bosom! O dearest—most cursed—blessed—charming devilish angel! what would I give if thou wert on the rack, and I but thy tormentor! O but these arms should be thy rack and these fingers the buckles"—saying which she seized on Lady Charlotte, and gave her a squeeze that made her eyes water.

"For heaven's sake, Jenny," said her ladyship, panting, "you will squeeze the breath out of me!"

"O my dear Charlotte," said Genevieve, "I scarce know what I do."

"If you don't I do," said Lady Charlotte, "for I am sure you have made my sides ache; you don't consider how strong you are! you must govern yourself, or you will frighten the man whom you love, out of his wits; if he is a sensible man he will choose a woman in her senses."

"I could tear out my tongue, Charlotte, for having told you what, I think, notwithstanding, has eased my heart in the telling; but there are moments in every woman's life when she will turn her heart inside out

like a purse to a friend, and pour forth all its contents."

"My dearest Jenny, did I ever betray anything in my life that you entrusted to my keeping?" said Lady Charlotte, "could my tongue ever be more silent if you had put it into a box and kept it in your pocket?"

"My dear girl," said Genevieve, "I know I can trust you—I have often blamed your silence, never quarrelled with you for talking—do advise me in this matter, for of all things about me I have the least of a rational creature—I am getting worse and worse every day, and shall do some foolish thing—if you burned as I burn," said she, laughing, "you would run about and cry, Fire! Fire!"

Poor Genevieve! and then she fell a-weeping again, and so, between fire and water, she was in a comical taking. Lady Charlotte comforted her all she could, and pressed her to tell the name of her sweetheart, but Genevieve could not bring herself to tell it for her heart. She promised, however, to tell it to her ladyship first, and that soon, but again begged for her advice with tears, for death, she said, were better than to live without him she loved.

"I could advise you better," said Lady Charlotte, "if I knew the person; but as you cannot get courage to tell me his name, I will do the best I can at a guess—you say he is an odd sort of a man—and sensible—suppose we put down the Philosopher, who is both—and consider what were best to be done if he were the very man."

Genevieve, at the naming of Acerbus, fell into too great a pucker not to tell her secret in almost every possible way but by word of mouth,—and the crafty

Lady Charlotte got what she wanted, making countenance all the while that she knew nothing of the matter, and went on as follows:—"Well, my dear Jenny, I will not press you any further to tell me the name of your love, and will advise you just as if I knew nothing about the matter—in the first place, then, you must moderate your passions, for though a sensible man would not marry a woman without passions, he would be loth to put up the banns of marriage between himself and Mount Vesuvius for instance, and live in constant dread of the overflowings of matrimonial lava—no sensible man can be expected to do that, Jenny."

"O Charlotte, Charlotte! who can disembowel *Ætna*'s bosom, and change it into frosty Caucasus!"

"What! heroics, Jenny! you must be far gone indeed!"

"You toad," said Genevieve, "I will throw you into the lake—come, tell me what I am to do—O what a fool have I been to let this devil get the dominion over me."

"Take care, Jenny," said Lady Charlotte, "love makes sad havoc in a proud heart; you must come down, or love will bring you down, or burn you down, take my word for it; otherwise all I ever heard or read of him are downright lies:—whoever this odd mortal is who has pinned your heart in his sleeve—"

"I will tear it off and go and live at my estate in Berkshire," said Genevieve.

"You must be in a tearing humour indeed if you do," said her ladyship; "for I am sure no poor maiden's heart was ever pinned faster to any man's sleeve than yours seems to be!"

"You saucy little devil," said Genevieve, "I will

throw you into the water!" saying which, Genevieve catched up Lady Charlotte in her arms, and ran to the bank with her, and made her squall out.

"You frighten me out of my senses, you are so violent, Jenny," said she; "love makes some animals mad, I am told; I am sure it has driven you out of your wits!—I will not trust myself any longer, with you."

"My dearest Charlotte," said Genevieve, kissing her cheek, "pray stay with me and comfort me, and advise with me, what can I, what shall I do?"

"Will you promise to be quiet then?"

"I will indeed," said she.

"Come, sit down again, then, and hear me: we all wish to marry the man we love, Jenny, and in that there can be no harm if he be an unexceptionable person, and we all wish to let him know, in an honest way, that he may come and take us as soon as he will for anything we care about the matter; but the greatest plagues are your sensible men, and such a one, it seems, you have to deal with, for they are sure to be very modest men, and to think lowly of their own merits, so that a poor girl may hint her heart out before she can make them understand it to be possible that they can be worthy her attention, while a good-for-nothing impudent coxcomb will take the most distant innuendo to his precious self in a moment, and, indeed, will set it down for granted that we are all equally in love with him if we could but find it in our hearts to speak. But if the man whom you love, Jenny, is of the first class, he is worth all your pains, and I will put you in a way to catch him if he is not in your net already."

"My dearest, sweetest Charlotte!" said Genevieve.

“No more of your ecstasies,” said Lady Charlotte, “for they absolutely terrify me; to conquer a sensible man you must conquer yourself, Jenny; men love to be loved, and warmly loved too, but not to be seized by a tiger.”

“Come,” said Genevieve, “put me in the way, I want to be put in the way, for I fear I have not got this fish in my net, who is worth all I ever caught put together.”

“It is a good rule, Jenny,” said she, “in running after any thing to take care not to make a false step by the way, and, to tell you the truth, Jenny, I must say that I think your neck is as much in danger as any neck in the world.”

“You be hanged,” said Genevieve, “come to the point; the worst of advice is, that it deals so much in generals: come to my particular case—you are a sly gipsy, and I dare say can be of use to me—tell me how I am to act, for I declare solemnly to you, Charlotte, that I cannot, will not live without this angelic devil—O, I love him! dearly, dearly love him!—sure no fond heart was half so fond as mine!—If I don’t wish you were as much in love as I am, Charlotte, I wish I may be hanged—why don’t you go on?”

“Go on!” said her ladyship, “who can speak a word while you are raving in this manner? you will not give the echoes time to say after you, or I am sure the walls of the castle, though they are half a mile off, would repeat every word you said!—attend to me—I will suppose for a moment, just to keep some one in my eye, that Acerbus, our philosopher, were the man of your heart. (Genevieve fluttered.) What ails you, Jenny?” continued her ladyship; “are you cold that you shudder so?”

“No,” said she, “cold! no; I am very far from being cold indeed at this moment.”

“Well then,” said her ladyship, “we will just suppose for argument sake, that Acerbus was the very man of your heart—now the first thing you must do is to study the temper, habits, inclinations and pursuits of the philosopher. Acerbus is fond of reading, and it is like would be fond of one who was fond of reading too. He is much engaged in natural history, and would be more taken with a new lizard, a new beetle, or a new butterfly than a hundred other things which would catch the fancies of others; now you must like, or seem to like the things which he likes, but be sure you let him find it out by chance. He has a large collection of caterpillars which he feeds in a glass case to see the changes of these curious animals, put your hand to the same thing, and get some too, and let him see you by mere chance gathering leaves for your caterpillars, it will take his attention, he will press you to show him your caterpillars; then do you make a favour of it, refuse him, and let him entreat before you yield to his desires. But you must so manage the thing as to get detected in it, not make any show of it, lest he suspect a trap.—The philosopher is very busy in making a collection of natural curiosities, as far as his narrow resources will permit, you are able to do the same in a far more costly way, and I suppose you had as lief put your money to this use as any other, do so, the thing will catch his attention, and be a means to catch something else at the same time. Acerbus is fond of shooting, remember never let any game leave the table without eating of it and commanding it. Make his dogs fond of you by taking a bit of bread with you,

The History of Mr. John Decastro

when you are like to meet with them, he will be pleased to see his dogs fond of you and you of his dogs, and if you are taken by surprise in giving a pointer a bit of bread, or a kiss, for there is no immodesty in kissing a pointer's forehead, try to make your escape as if you did not wish to be seen in it. I am afraid matters are too far gone with you, or you might use, at times, some little scorn and contempt, for we should never let the person know whom we wish to catch, that we are hunting for him."

"O my dear Charlotte," said Genevieve with a sigh, "this is all such a roundabout way to come at what one ardently desires; one that loves as I do, if these things could be done as you say, cannot have the patience to do them!"

"What can we poor women do," returned her ladyship, "but sit like a spider in a corner, and watch and wait till the fly rushes into our toils? The person must come of his own accord, we cannot dart out and seize on our prey, and, indeed, it would not be worth our having if we could."

"A plague take the jackanapes!" said Genevieve; "I wish he had been hanged for sheep-stealing before he had stolen my sheepish heart, then I might have wrapped myself quietly in my wool and slept soundly o' nights! O Charlotte, Charlotte! I hate the thoughts of night! did you ever hear of any who ran mad in her dreams?"

"No," said her ladyship, "I think it is quite enough for people to run mad with their eyes open. I have heard of such folks before now."

"And you need not go far for an instance your sauciness would insinuate," said Genevieve, "meaning me,

The History of Mr. John Decastro

however, you need not go far to find a fool, or I had kept this folly to myself," added she, and wept.

"Come, my dear Jenny," said her ladyship, "you cannot be in safer hands, though I must contradict you in this, and beg to say, that to feel a regard for a young man of merit is not a folly; so far otherwise, I think it is no very common mark of wisdom in our sex, so apt as they are to have false appetites for the veriest trash of mankind. Alas, my dearest Jenny, how seldom do we see a beauty in the arms of a worthy man! But to return to our philosopher——"

"Return to our philosopher!" said Genevieve with a start, "why, you speak as if Acerbus was"——here she hesitated.

"Don't put yourself into a flutter," said her ladyship; "we have put him for your heart-stealer, your charming thief, all the while, because Acerbus is very odd, and very sensible, and very good, and to say the truth, I think, if you are so fond of odd things that are sensible things and good things, yes, and handsome things too, for I think the philosopher a very handsome man."

"You great fool," said Genevieve, "how you talk!"

"Yes, I say," continued she, "for I will not be beaten off; I think, if you are so fond of all those odd things, that Acerbus the philosopher would not go against your stomach."

"What do you mean, you plague?" said Genevieve; "I'd as lief marry the wonderful fish that was shown in Piccadilly for a shilling.—I shall be afraid of you, Charlotte, after what I have told you, I have put myself, like a great fool, so much in your power: tell me that you are in love directly that I may be even with you."

"O that I am," said she, "and not such a fool to

The History of Mr. John Decastro

make any secret of it, and want to be married so bad that I sometimes fall a-crying about it!"

"You are a queer toad, Charlotte," said Genevieve; "but, seriously, you would not have me tell people so?"

"Yes, but I would though," said her ladyship, "for it might get round to the ears of my love, and then he might take compassion and send me a letter. But come, Jenny, tell me when you saw your wonderful fish last, and if you think he is like to bite at you? I think if you do as I bid you, that you will soon find him a-nibbling. But, remember, not a bit of the hook must be seen; he must feel that before he sees it."

The ladies were now disturbed by voices, and hurried away.

A few days after this, and some more of the like advice, Genevieve began to open a new plan of works against the philosopher, and it came to pass that he dropt upon her unawares under a hedge in one of Old Crab's meadows. She had a little basket in her hand, and his favourite pointer Ponto was lying by her side as she sat upon the grass. The philosopher saw her very busy with her fingers in her basket, and felt some curiosity to see what she was doing; and presently she gave Ponto a bit of sweet cake out of it, who put his two paws directly into her lap, and fell to licking her face as if it were something very savoury. She did not seem to take Ponto's kisses much in anger, however, for she caught him in her arms and gave him some in return, and another piece of sweet cake, when the pointer curled himself round and lay down at her feet.

Love me, love my dog, quoth the philosopher to himself, and, plucking a leaf, put it between the pages of

a folio edition of Aristotle to keep his place, then laid the old Stagirite down under an oak, crept round the bush under which Genevieve sat, and saw her pick a great caterpillar off it and put it into her basket. Ponto, smelling his master, jumped up at that moment and began to whine and wag his tail. Genevieve jumped up too, and saw the philosopher standing behind the bush.

“You great blockhead,” said she, “what are you come for?”

“Come for!” said Acerbus, “why, this is the way I usually walk in an evening—what makes Ponto and you so fond of one another all on a sudden? what have you got in that basket, Jenny?”

“What’s that to you, you fool,” said she, “nothing at all.”

“I see some leaves in it,” said he, poking his finger under its lid.

“Keep your nasty fingers out of my basket, or I’ll beat it about your stupid pate,” said she.

“You are very cross this evening, Jenny,” said he—“come, I know what is in it, there is some cake in it, for I saw you give Ponto a bit of cake out of it—and I saw you put some leaves and a caterpillar into it.”

“Then, if you know, why d’ye ask, ye great ass?” said she.

“To see if you made any secret of what it had in it,” said he; “let me just look at your caterpillar, Jenny.”

“You shall not see it, so get along,” said she.

“I lost a very curious one in that very bush yesterday, it made its escape among the leaves—pray tell me, cousin, has it got a horn upon its tail?”

The philosopher, a little too eager to see Genevieve’s

caterpillar, laid hold on her basket, upon which she gave him a great push and rolled him upon the grass. Lady Charlotte, who had wandered from her friend in search of wild flowers, came round some trees just as the philosopher was tumbled upon the ground—she ran to him, and asked him kindly if he was hurt?—seeing him laugh, she said, “I declare, if I were you, cousin, I would go and tumble her down out of pure revenge!”

“If the blockhead comes near me again,” said Genevieve with a haughty frown, “I will break his neck.” Upon this Acerbus walked away. “Call your dog,” said Genevieve, driving poor Ponto from her, “I can’t think what the brute comes after me for?”

Poor Ponto turned his head round as he went from her, and gave her a look that cut her to the heart.

“Jenny,” said Lady Charlotte, as soon as Acerbus had walked a good distance, “if you drive the men away in this manner, you had best drive them out of your thoughts too; for you may take my word for it you will get such a name, if you have it not already, that not a man of them all will come within an acre’s length of you.” Genevieve threw herself at the foot of a tree and wept. “I vow,” said Lady Charlotte, “I will call Acerbus back and you shall beg his pardon. I saw what passed—he only wanted to look into your basket—what have you got in it?” said she.

“Let the basket alone, Charlotte,” said Genevieve, “or I shall be very angry with you! stay, Charlotte, you shall not call him back: I beg his pardon! I’ll beg him a halter! He has been watching me about all the evening, what can the coxcomb want?”

“Come, Jenny, don’t abuse my cousin, he is no coxcomb—I wish I could catch him watching me about, as

The History of Mr. John Decastro

you say, he should not ask twice to look into my basket, I assure you."

"I declare I'll tell him what you say the next time I meet him," said Genevieve.

"I wish you would," said her ladyship, "I don't care how soon he knows it; but you'll bite your tongue off before you will tell him so, I know very well."

"Do you think I care whose basket he looks into, Charlotte?"

"Well, my dear Jenny, don't be so angry; my cousin is an odd mortal, but he is a very handsome, and, what is better, a very worthy young man; there is as much difference between him and other young men of these fine days, as there is between men and monkeys."

"George Grove is as good every bit and as handsome without his oddities," said Genevieve.

"High ho," said Lady Charlotte, "there you have hit upon my true love!—the next time I meet Julia I'll tear her cap. O, Jenny, Jenny, what a nice young man George Grove is! I wish the law allowed us two husbands, I should like to have George and Acerbus, and take one for summer and the other for winter."

"You gipsy, you don't care a farthing for either, or any body else, you would not be so merry if you did."

"I declare I will look into your basket," said her ladyship, and, pulling open its lid, turned it bottom upward, when out tumbled twenty caterpillars and a great luncheon of sweet cake.

Up jumped Genevieve, and away ran Lady Charlotte and she after her; it would have done any man's heart good to have seen the race. Were there any tumbles? Yes—Lady Charlotte fell twice and Genevieve three times. Were there any shows?—yes—exhibitions,

The History of Mr. John Decastro

rather, worth all the shows at Somerset-house, for whoever saw a lady tumble down in a picture and get up again? What's a picture good for when not a figure in it can set one foot before the other?

Segnus irritant animos dimissa per aurem
Quam quæ sunt oculis subiecta fidelibus.* HOR.

What a sad loss it is to ladies and gentlemen, their ignorance of the Latin tongue! Now it came to pass that the race aforesaid ran by Old Crab's garden, where Old Comical was digging up some potatoes—he saw them coming afar off, Lady Charlotte scouring along and Genevieve pouring after her! frightened, at first, he looked to see if any dog or other animal was in pursuit, but as soon as he found all was in fun, Old Comical whipt a chemise off a clothes line, and, jumping upon a great horse-block, displayed the Holland at arm's length by way of prize to the winner: seeing which Genevieve stopt short, and Lady Charlotte ran laughing into Old Crab's garden.

Although these things happened sometime afterwards, we must add a word or two in this place before we go back to bring George and Julia's love affair along with us:—A turkey, upon occasion, will just put its head into a little hole, and think, like a fool, that no part of its body can be seen. Genevieve's regard for the philosopher was quite as much hid, and she quite as much a fool to think that nobody could see the very

* The quotation is from Horace's "Ars Poetica," lines 180-181. Conington's translation runs as follows:

A thing when heard, remember, strikes less keen
On the spectator's mind than when 'tis seen.

Editor's Note.

thing that was apparent to every body's eyes!—But why conceal any thing from her friend when she had confessed so much?—Why not show the turkey's head as well as the turkey's tail? This is one of those nice shades of complexion, reader, which colour Genevieve, one of those fine cracks in her character which serve to show how her joinery differs from other women; one of those delicate juncturæ, as Horace calls them, invisible to all but the judicious eye—and it would have been unpardonable in the historian not to have brought the reader's nose close enough to discover it. But why did she run after Lady Charlotte? Why she was in love, which is one reason for doing any thing; but here we own, which is a great deal more than many historians will do, we own we cannot tell—we can guess, however, with the best of them, and own it too, which is also more than many will do—she might run after her ladyship to beg of her to keep to herself what suspicions came into her head upon seeing the pointer, the cake, and the caterpillars, aye, and the philosopher too, all so near together, that there certainly seemed to be some secret connection which Genevieve had no mind should be seen; or she might run after Lady Charlotte to stretch her legs after sitting so long upon the ground at play with the philosopher's dog; or she might wish to know which could run the fastest; or she might want to whip Lady Charlotte; or she might have an I-don't-know-howishness about her which no lady can run away from unless she runs one way—this is all very foolish!—you are right, reader, it is made so on purpose to please the fools, which are nine parts in ten of the world, and therefore best worth a writer's pleasing, for if all the fools will buy a book, as for reading it

The History of Mr. John Decastro

they may just do as they please about that, the writer were a fool too for his pains if he cared a farthing for a few wise folks in a corner.

When we came to the word "corner," we grew so dull, notwithstanding the brilliancy of our genius, that we could not write another for half an hour; and we dare say that there have been certain times and seasons when the divine Plato himself had not a word to throw at a dog, and Aristotle could not say "BOH!" to a goose.—When a man talks to the wise he should fill his sentences full of shining sparks; when he writes, he should set his page with diamonds. But what is become of Genevieve?—well put in, we had as much forgot her as if no such star e'er shone in beauty's heaven. Let us just peep into her—What a raree-show a beautiful woman is! what a number of pretty things she carries about with her which it rejoiceth the heart of man to look at! and yet how little is seen in comparison to what is not seen! What if a man could go over new ground?—[*The Solid Gentleman gave Old Comical a jog at the elbow here, and made him blot where he did not intend it.*]—Well, well, we have done, we have done; but what needs a woman to hide what she never stole? If she hath a handsome leg, why may not a man ask to look at it? If every thing that is made is a good thing, what hinders but a good thing may be seen? If a thing be a bad thing, why, the more it were hid, and the less it were seen, the better: if a good thing, what else were worth the looking at? A good thing can do no good, nor get any credit, if it be forever hid, the beauty of its workmanship is thrown away upon it, the admiration of the world is lost! The children of the brush, and the children of the chisel, the noble

The History of Mr. John Decastro

works of the painter and the statuary, what would it boot the world if all were locked up in the closets of the artist? What would a man say if any body put *Venus di Medici* into petticoats? and, if a man wanted to look at her legs, make a great outcry, and say, it were indecent to touch her clothes? What the devil, is not a fine woman to have the advantage of a stone statue? Must all those beauties be hidden which are the divine originals of these marble excellencies? The ladies are fools to submit to any such dishonour. Clothes are a disgrace to a beauty! The finest limbs in the world ought not to be kept in the dark, it is an insult upon the most beautiful part of the sex to wear any clothes at all!—let the old and the ugly, the halt and the deformed hide themselves, and welcome, from the eyes of the world, but be beauty's heaven no longer overcast with clothes; let every pretty woman disrobe by all means, and pour her glories upon the world like the sun without a cloud!

Hollo! who can show us the way back into the high road? Right, very right! aye, aye, we were just going to look into *Genevieve's* bosom; now, we suppose, notwithstanding its exquisite beauty, some may think a man had better look into an ulcer; a man had best keep his eyes out of dangerous places, certainly, so we will turn our's another way.

Genevieve had told her friend that she was in love, but would not, for some reason, name her sweetheart to her;—now the circumstantial evidence which had just arisen, cast, like the sun, such a blaze of light upon the philosopher, that, unless it put her ladyship's eyes out, for one sometimes cannot see for light, *Genevieve* had good reason to think that her friend could be kept

The History of Mr. John Decastro

no longer in the dark: and though none need light a candle to find Genevieve's honest man, she, however, good soul, thought him as much hid as if she had put him in a locket, and dropt him down half a yard into her bosom. Her kissing his dog and feeding him with sweet cake, and her falling all on a sudden to gathering caterpillars in a basket, looked so like following her friend's advice to catch a philosopher, that, if the circumstances of the case had been counted out by my Lord Ellenborough, (God bless him!) counted out by my Lord Ellenborough before a jury, Genevieve had gone nigh to be hanged. But we must now stick a bough in the ground to mark how far we have run forward, and run back to bring George and Julia to this place.

To return then to Oaken Grove:—the love affair between George Grove and Julia began very much to engage the attention of the families in that neighbourhood; who, according to custom in these cases, contrived to meet each other without the knowledge or consent of their parents. Mr. Grove and Old Crab had talked a good deal on this matter, and had come to a resolution to put a stop to it as soon as possible. Old Crab had said, and repeated it, that he had no objection to George Grove at all; he was a very good lad, but he had no thoughts of making his daughter a fine lady, her breeding never looked that way, he had no mind to match her into such a family as Mr. Grove's, she had not been bred to any such expectations. As to money, he thought there might be too much as well as too little, he looked to a competency, and that was all he looked to, for his child, it bade fairer for her happiness and comfort than to marry a man of twenty

The History of Mr. John Decastro

thousand a-year. Mr. Grove readily agreed with Old Crab upon this, and they parted with a determination to keep George and Julia at a distance from each other.

Old Crab, upon his return to the farm, having a little time on his hands, took a walk round his grounds to examine his fences, or to look if his cattle were in their pastures, when, coming near the little grove where George and Julia held their meetings, he fancied that he heard the sound of voices in it, upon which he walked into the copse, and getting a little nearer to the place whence the sound came, he heard George Grove say, "If you cannot come, Julia, put a letter under the stone as usual."

"I will do so," said she, "if I cannot come, but I will come if I can."

This was an unlucky discovery; Old Crab, however, lay by till they were gone out of the wood, and upon looking a little further in it, came to a pretty arbour woven of braided boughs under a spreading tree, which formed a broad back to a chair made of turf and moss, in the bark of which Julia and George's names were carved in true-love-knots and pretty flourishes. So thick was the roof plated with boughs interwoven together that it protected Old Crab from a heavy shower of rain which fell at that time.

As soon as the shower was over, he went home without speaking a word about this his discovery, but returning to the place the next morning he found a letter for George put under the stone aforesaid.—This letter explained matters a little further, and gave him to understand that a mutual promise had been made between them to be true to each other. When he came home he called for Julia, who was busy in the dairy, and

The History of Mr. John Decastro

said, "Come here, you jade, who taught you to write letters?"

"Write letters, papa?"

"Yes, who taught you to write letters, I say?"

"Nobody, papa."

"What, did you never write a letter in your life, hussy?"

"Yes, papa, I have written two or three."

"To whom? answer me this moment."

"La! papa, what do you ask for?"

"No matter, tell me, I say, to whom have you written?"

"Why, I wrote once to my uncle at the castle, to tell him when you would send him some hay and some oats for his horses; you bid mamma do it, and mamma bid me do it—her eyes were weak from a cold, papa, and so—"

"Come, chattering—whom did you ever write to besides?"

"Sometimes to my cousin Jenny, papa."

"To whom else? did you ever write to any man besides your uncle?"

"Man, papa, man, papa?"

"Yes, man—you know the meaning of the word, I warrant."

"Dear papa—what man can you mean?"

"Did you, or did you not ever write to any man besides your uncle?—tell me this instant!" Julia blushed. "Why don't the girl speak?" quoth he.

"Write, papa—no."

"Come here this moment!"

Upon which Old Crab, pulling poor Julia a little roughly upon his knee, took the letter, which he had

The History of Mr. John Decastro

found directed to George Grove and put under the stone in the little arbour, out of his pocket, and opening it under her eyes, "You young hussy," said he, "what do you call this?"

Poor Julia, the moment she saw the letter, fainted away, and fell upon Old Crab's bosom. She held a milk-pan in her hand, coming out of the dairy in haste on being called, which dropt upon the ground and made a great noise, at which her mother, running in a great hurry to see what was broken, for it was an earthen pan, found Julia in a fit supported by her father, and fell to the usual modes and means of recovering her without asking any questions.

Old Crab took a walk forthwith to Hindermark, and laid this his second discovery and Julia's letter before Mr. Grove. George was called and the letter shown to him. A wiser man than he would have looked like a fool upon such an occasion, so he could not be expected to look much otherwise. Mr. Grove was very well informed by this letter how matters stood between his son and Julia, and what an alarming progress their attachment to each other had made. He saw no time was to be lost, so Mr. and Mrs. Grove left Hindermark early the next morning, and took George along with them, without telling any body whither they were gone.

CHAPTER XXV

Genevieve's attachment to Julia—Julia makes Lady Charlotte Orby and Genevieve her Confidants—Lord Budemere communicates the Proposals of the Hindermark Family to Lady Charlotte.

WHAT is called the season in town was now over, and Mrs. Decastro, who had never failed to make good the conditions of the agreement made between her and Mr. Decastro on their first arrival at the castle, was now returned to it, and though the winter was but that moment out of the sky in London, she found summer in it by the time she got to the castle, notwithstanding she had travelled into the north. Whether she thought five bodies in a carriage would break the jolts better than two, or, if they happened to quarrel there might be a casting voice, or when there are more in a coach folks keep one another warmer than when there are less, or, whatever else she had in her head, she brought Lord and Lady Budemere and their daughter Lady Charlotte Orby back with her and her niece Genevieve to Oaken Grove.

Genevieve, it may be recollected, always went to town with her aunt, though London was not much to her liking, but her father gave orders on his death bed that she should be made a woman of fashion. So her aunt took her to London to make her one, and, moreover, to get her a husband: but Genevieve was a saucy jade, and boxed every man's ears that made her an

offer—saucy! aye, and so she need to be, or such a world of money as her father left her would have been thrown away upon her, and that would have been a pity. She, and her cousin Lady Charlotte Orby were old cronies, bred at the same school, and great friends, so now they might have a good gossiping, and talk over their old fun when they were school-girls and pinned the teacher's and the dancing master's tails together.

“Come, Charlotte,” said she, “let us walk to my uncle's farm and see our cousin, the pretty milk-maid.”

So as they walked through a beautiful pasture called Dairy-Mead, they met Julia with her milk-pail on her arm, and wiping her eyes with her apron.

“My dear Julia,” said Genevieve, “what are you crying for?”

Upon which she made Lady Charlotte and Genevieve her confidants, and told them the whole story of herself and George Grove. Now nothing in the world pleases girls better than a love story, no matter how sad it is. Lady Charlotte and Genevieve stood as silent as two mice till they heard all, and, if Julia had talked on, would have stood till they were gray. Poor Julia! how the tears ran down into her bosom while she told her story! As soon as she had done they comforted her all they could, and they did not swear, but both bound themselves in a solemn promise to get George Grove for her if they could. Both went home directly and sat down and wrote two hundred letters. Nothing on the face of the earth sets a woman's ink a-running like love: if you see a spot of ink upon the tip of a woman's middle finger, you may safely swear that either she is in love herself, or some of her friends.

“Charlotte,” said Genevieve, “did not Julia say that

George Grove was to be forced into a match with some lord's daughter?"

"Yes," said she, "but I cannot think who that can be, now, for the Groves visit so many noblemen's families in town:—surely it cannot be Lady Louisa P.?"

"Write to her at a venture," said Genevieve, "but don't forget to keep Julia's name a secret, we have promised that you know: say every thing which you can think of to set her against the match, and I will write to her father and her mother, her uncle, her two aunts, and four of her cousins, and do the same."

And thus they went to work with many others, but did not hit upon the right person after all.

"If I knew who she was," said Lady Charlotte, "I'd run and bite her."

"And if I knew who she was I'd go and scratch her," said Genevieve; and so they ran on as if nothing ill could come amiss to the poor lady who was to be married to George Grove.

"He is a very fine young man," said Lady Charlotte, "and, my uncle Bat says, bears an excellent character at Oxford—I think I should like to have him myself, Jenny."

"Surely you mean if our pretty cousin were out of the question?" said Genevieve.

"O I would break my heart twenty times, if it could be mended again, sooner than take him from Julia!" said her ladyship.

At that moment a servant came in with twenty letters for Lady Charlotte, and five-and-thirty for Genevieve, with a note:—

"What note's that?" said Lady Charlotte.

"It comes from Mr. Grove's house-keeper, I writ to

her to ask if she knew where the family were gone—but she says that nobody knows anything about the matter.” So they fell to reading their letters.

“O dear me!” cries Genevieve, “Mrs. Rosewood has run away with her husband’s butler!”

“I have got that,” said Lady Charlotte, “in my letter from Lady Q. Well, well, well, Miss Scamper is gone off with Captain Blunderbuss.”

“I have got that,” said Genevieve, “in my letter from Lady Mary B.”

“Mr. and Mrs. Carrick are gone abroad and left their estate in a cradle—at nurse, I suppose, Miss H. means,—a miserable jest;—but she is an authoress, and may put off any nonsense for wit.”

“I have got that too,” said Lady Charlotte, “in my letter from Mrs. Gad, who tells me that Lord Ringwood has broken his arm a-hunting.”

“I have it ‘neck,’ here,” said Genevieve, “in my letter from Lady Harriet Z., who says that Colonel Barret left England fifty thousand pounds in debt.”

“No, no,” said Lady Charlotte, “she is wrong, her sister says, here, in her letter, forty thousand pounds:—and adds that our pretty cousin Frederick Decastro is gone with him.”

“So says Lady Harriet Z. in her letter to me.”

“Well, wherever he goes, I hope he will go into that part of the world where they make the strongest halters!” said Genevieve.

“Bless me,” exclaims Lady Charlotte, “what a piece of news I have got to tell you; Mr. Christopher Cocky, your very great admirer, has married a woman seven feet high!”

“I was just reading the very same thing in my letter

The History of Mr. John Decastro

from Mrs. Bangam: well," added Genevieve, "he is five feet high with his shoes on; so five feet put to seven feet make twelve feet: thus matrimony ties up long and short sticks in the same fagot."

They were running on, each telling the other for news what both had in their own letters, when Lord Budemere came into the room, and, taking Lady Charlotte out of it, spoke as follows:

"Charlotte," said he, "you may remember when Mr. and Mrs. Grove were with us at the Lodge, that I hinted a thing to you concerning a nameless person then in our thoughts, whom you took to be Lord George E. I had a little reason at that time to leave you in your error."

"Error! papa! why, did not Lord George E. make his proposals to me within a few days after? who could you mean, if not Lord George?"

"Hear me," said his lordship. "I will now explain matters; you were easily led into the error, for Lord George is a relation of Mr. Grove's as well as another, whom I then really meant, and now have to propose to you, since both his lordship and Sir Harry St. Clair have been refused."

"Surely, papa, you cannot mean Mr. George Grove?"

"His father and I have had a little correspondence of late, and he has himself made his proposals to us for his son. I made, I own, a little advance in the matter, enough to assure him that George, if he knocked at our doors, would not be bolted out; so the offer comes very well from them, you know, since we are not quite on the right side of the question to begin a thing of this sort. Mr. George Grove will have a much larger fortune than either the baronet or his lordship, and it

The History of Mr. John Decastro

is by far the best offer we have yet had, and cannot by any means be refused. I shall leave the matter to your consideration, and look for your answer in a day or two:" saying which, his lordship took his leave; and Lady Charlotte returned to her cousin Genevieve, who immediately took notice that she went out of the room with one face and came into it with another. Lady Charlotte laughed it off, however, when they again fell to their letters, and nothing more was said about the said change of countenance at that time.

Now Lady Charlotte had a mind to George Grove herself, but how to get him at once, and keep her promises with her cousins, perplexed her not a little. And well it might, for if the thing were not an impossibility, it was within a very little of it: see what comes of making rash promises.

CHAPTER XXVI

A young Farmer pays his addresses to Julia—A great Up-roar at Old Crab's Farm—*Old Comical takes the pen, after a few drops of ink from the Solid Gentleman.*

OLD Crab took Julia into his study, as soon as she was well recovered from her fainting fit, and preached her a sermon upon telling of lies which held her two hours. He told her that the devil was the father of them, and if she conceived them, and brought them forth, she must needs be the devil's wife. Poor Julia, who had rather be George Grove's wife a great deal, sobbed and cried, begged pardon upon her knees, poor girl, and said, "that she was very sorry for what she had done." Upon which Old Crab forgave her, and, taking her upon his knee, told her that she must think no more of George Grove. It is one thing to give orders, and another to get a thing done: to unthink a thing which she had been so long a-thinking on was no such easy matter. A heart once lost is a thing not so easily found again, and Julia, poor girl, might have looked long enough before she had found her's, though she knew very well who had it all the while. She had like to have told another fib though, and said, "Indeed, papa, I will think no more of Mr. George Grove," when she thought of nothing else all day long, and dreamed of nothing else all night. However, he luckily interrupted her, but it was with very unwelcome news, and so far not very lucky indeed.

“Come, come,” said Old Crab, “dry up your tears and I will find a husband for you, one more suitable to a poor wench in your condition, than a man of twenty or thirty thousand a year.”

John Cartland was then named to her, son of Farmer Cartland of Broad Oak. This young man had been in love with her a great while, but hearing what a great man Julia had got for her sweetheart, thought his chances were very small, so he kept himself at a distance and put up with his heart-ache as well as he could. When Old Crab named him to her, she said “that he had some time since sent her a letter, but she told him that she was very sorry, but had got a sweetheart already.”

“You are a slut for not telling us,” quoth Old Crab; “but go this moment and get yourself ready to see him, he will be here presently.”

So glad was the young farmer, that he set out before all the family, who were engaged that day to dine with Old Crab, and came first to make a little love before dinner. As soon as her father had done with her, Julia’s mother took her aside to tell her how she was to behave to Mr. John Cartland.

“Julia,” said she, “you are grown to be so fine a lady by being so much with these fine folks at the castle, and have taken such an air from Mr. George Grove’s company, that I am afraid the young farmer will think you too proud; but you ought to remember that, although we have such good relations, we are poor people ourselves, and must not give ourselves any airs. I don’t mean to say that you are a proud girl, Julia, because indeed I don’t think that you are so, but you must be particularly careful in this matter, for, having

The History of Mr. John Decastro

been so much of late among lords and ladies, you may appear to be so without meaning it, and frighten a plain man."

"Indeed, mamma," said Julia, "I should be sorry to be thought proud, and will do the best I can to receive Mr. Cartland in a civil manner: but, my dear mamma, beg a little time for me to try to forget somebody—and I will strive to do my best to come into your and my papa's wishes."

"You were always a very good girl, Julia," said Mrs. B. Decastro—"but here is the young farmer."

And indeed Master John rode up at that moment to the gate, in a suit of bright peach-colour cloth made on purpose for the day; for Old Crab had bid the good farmer put a new suit of clothes upon his son John, and teach him to make a bow: upon which Master John put his best leg foremost, and, having entered a new suit of clothes of a bright peach-colour, as aforesaid, came down from Broad Oak as bright as a star, to pay his addresses to Julia. Poor Julia, who had been so long used to the elegant dress and manners of George Grove, upon the entrance of Master John had much ado to help laughing. Master John was a short man, but no ill figure if the tailor had let him alone, but Master Snip had so stitched him up in some places and let him loose in others, that he had anything rather than human proportions about him; and not being used to be so very fine made matters a great deal worse.

Master John, however, notwithstanding his epileptic fit at the sight of Julia, did as his father bade him, and made a bow, or a thing which he thought the most like one, and left a long scrawl of dirt on the floor as a proof of it. Old Comical gave him a touch behind to put

The History of Mr. John Decastro

him in mind to pull his hat off, but it was no easy matter, for it was a new one bought on purpose for the day, and however the young farmer got his head into it, it was not very soon to be got out again; but Old Comical laying hold behind and Master John laying hold before, they pulled off his hat between them. So now he stood before his sweetheart with his hat in one hand, and a stiff hazel staff, with Cupid a-shooting carved upon the knob of it, in the other, but could not speak a loud word for his heart.

Mrs. B. Decastro, seeing the young man a little bashful before company, went out of the room, and, shutting the door, left Julia and Farmer John together.—What a sad thing it is to be frightened! It now came into Master John's head that it would be polite to get Julia a chair, a good thought, but it brought an accident with it, for the farmer, coming with the chair in one hand and his hat and cudgel in the other, the said cudgel got between his legs and threw him and the chair both down together at Julia's feet, where the staff would needs have it a lover ought to lie. Julia came to his assistance and took the cudgel away from him, for he still held it fast in his hand, and got Master John upon his legs, which was some trouble, for he had got a new pair of leather breeches on, made so tight that he had scarce any more use of his limbs than if half of them had been struck with the palsy. She set up the chair, put the farmer on his way to it, and said, she hoped that he had not taken any hurt in his fall.

When a man's hand is in, it is amazing how many blunders he makes!—In the next place Master John must needs put his hat upon a chair and sit down upon it, which, being a new beaver and exceeding stiff, was

not in the humour to give way to Master John's pressure, but, as if to be revenged for the indignity, mounted him up in a very ridiculous manner; however, he made a straddle of it and took the crown thereof very well between his knees, the tightness of his breeches notwithstanding, and was very safely seated if he could have sat still. Julia, seeing him to be in no little confusion, asked him how all the family did at Broad Oak Farm, how corn sold, whether they had begun hay-making, and other the like questions, and among other things admired the quaint devices carved on the head of the young farmer's staff which she held in her hand; and, though he might have trusted her with the cudgel very safely, yet he seemed to think that he might as well get possession of it, he took it from her, therefore, for she sat near him, and laid it at its length at his foot on the floor;—in an evil hour, as will be seen.

Farmer John sat, reader, upon an old-fashioned long-backed chair with very short heels, and the more likely on that account to fall backwards. His hat between his knees stretched as far apart as his tight breeches would allow to admit the crown of it, and his hazel staff extended at his foot on the floor, when Old Comical, not recollecting the room to be full of the tender passion, came in on a sudden to fetch Old Crab's best wig, that hung upon a candle-stick on the mantle-piece, in order to repair the same, being a hand at a wig, and put it in buckle for dinner. The door being opened on a sudden made the young farmer start, for, being in a fright already, he the more readily gave way to fresh surprises, and, in an attempt to jump up, put his foot upon his cudgel, which, as he thought, he had now laid out of his way. Being a round thing, the cudgel made

a sort of rolling motion upon its being trod on, and threw Master John with some force against the back of the chair, which, put thereby past its balance, came down backwards, and brought John Cartland along with it to the floor with his boots in the air.

Old Comical, who loved a joke dearly, but never made jest of a man in distress, clapt Old Crab's best wig on his head upon his own, and was running to help the young farmer, when in came Julia's mother in great haste upon hearing a noise which shook the homestall. Conceiving John to be taking more liberties with Julia than came to his share on a first visit—but nothing at that time was so far from his thoughts—she found him lying on his back, and stunned with his fall. He presently came to his senses, for having cut his head against the window seat, a flow of blood soon relieved him.

Old Comical now ran up-stairs and brought down his best night-cap, gayly adorned with three horizontal stripes of different colours, and a large tassel, like an artichoke, upon the crown thereof, and, after some soft linen and a few drops of Friar's balsam had been administered by Julia's fair hands to the wound, put the cap upon Master Cartland's head, and bound it on with one of his own garters; then, giving Old Crab's wig some masterly touches, ran out to take old Farmer Cartland's horse that had drawn all the rest of the family from Broad Oak. After a little talk about the accident, they all sat down to dinner, and Old Comical waited upon the company.

Now it came to pass, after the boiled beef and cabbage, the ham and the fowls were removed, and the wine, punch, pipes, and strong beer put upon the table,

The History of Mr. John Decastro

“Look ye, Master Cartland,” quoth Old Crab, “we will have no forcing and driving in this business, we shall be glad to see your son at a leisure hour at the farm, and if he and my wench can agree we’ll have a wedding——”

“And if so be that they cannot,” interrupted the old farmer, “why, there’s no harm done.”

“I loves Miss Julee rarely well,” quoth Madam Cartland, “and if as why she can get the better of her heart and hankerings, for I have been told that the Squire don’t care for a match betwixt her and his son, why, as I says, I hopes as how my son John, heaven bless him, may be her man after all, but yet, as why, as I says, I ba’nt for cramming force-meat into her mouth whether she wool or no.”

“Well, well,” quoth Old Crab, “we shall see how matters will be; you and I understand one another, Master Cartland, Bullocks-Hatch and the water-meads come with your son, if the thing take place, and three thousand pounds go with my wench. But the home-stall must be repaired at your expense, I insist upon that, and I will keep the young folks until the farm-house be got ready for them.”

“Look you, Master Decastro,” quoth the old farmer, “you must bear me half in that matter, it will cost me three hundred pounds.”

“Not a penny,” quoth Old Crab, “I have put five hundred pounds to my wench’s fortune in order to take a step toward you, Master Cartland, so now it is your turn to take a step toward me.”

“Come, come,” quoth the old farmer, “you will build a cow-house?”

“No,” quoth Old Crab.

“A cart-house?”

“No,” quoth Old Crab.

“A fatting hog-stye?”

“No,” quoth Old Crab.

“Find me tiles for the wheat-barn?”

“No,” quoth Old Crab.

“Be something towards the furniture?”

“No,” quoth Old Crab.

“What, not a bed?”

“No,” quoth Old Crab.

“Come,” said Mrs. B. Decastro, “I have feathers enough by me to make a bed, if my husband will allow me to make a little offer on my part.”

“Well, well,” quoth Old Crab, “I sha’n’t stick out for a few feathers, give us your hand, Master Cartland, if ’tis a bargain.”

Upon which Old Crab and the old farmer shook hands.

Now it came to pass that the news of this grand dinner, and the cause of it had reached the castle, and excited no little curiosity in the party there to see Julia’s new lover. The Earl and Countess of Budemere and Mr. and Mrs. Decastro ordered their carriages to be got ready, and, taking Lady Charlotte Orby and Genevieve along with them, they sallied forth in two coaches and four, to pay a visit to the farm in the evening.—Well, up they came all on a sudden to Old Crab’s door upon a full gallop, and threw old Farmer Cartland and all his family into the greatest consternation!—The old farmer jumped up, and laid hold on his hat, and called for his cart and his old wig, for it had rained, and his best might be spoiled, so he had brought two in case of accidents, one on his head and another

in his pocket—Madam Cartland also jumped up, and up jumped her six daughters, who were all very fat and therefore made the greater crowd in a little room, and fell into a great pucker, getting into one another's way, and running one against another in scrambling for hats, cloaks, and bonnets!

Old Crab, do or say what he might, could not quiet the waters, so he leaned with both his hands and with all his might upon the table, and it was as much as ever he could do to keep it from being overturned two or three times during the great push. Julia and Mrs. B. Decastro ran out first to receive the great folks and put them all very safely into her little parlor, wherein Old Comical had set the tea things and the bread and butter all in order, before he went out to feed the pigs. Mrs. B. Decastro now, leaving Julia the mistress of the ceremonies, returned to the dining-room in order to pacify the terrified souls whom she had left in it. She found them in a great bustle, and in as much haste to make their escape as if the fine folks whom they saw come out of the carriages ate human flesh. The main push was now towards the back kitchen door, at which the old farmer first arrived, by main force driving his way through his wife and his six fat daughters. Old Dragon, the cart-horse, was harnessed in a moment, the cart brought up to the said back door, and loaded in a trice with the farmer and his family; upon which Master Cartland laid his cudgel upon old Dragon's bones, who was forced to drag his amazing load over all the dunghills to get the nearest way out of the farm-yard!—Old Comical stood by and held his sides with laughter.

Genevieve and Lady Charlotte felt the greatest

curiosity of any to see the young farmer, but Old Cartland had made such a sudden start of it that they had like to be thrown out at last but for a piece of bright scarlet riband which adorned old Dragon's bit-halter, which said bit of finery caught Lady Charlotte's attention as Old Comical led the sturdy animal across the farm-yard. This had been Dolly Cartland's doing, who felt a little tenderness for her father's carter, and must needs rob her own head to deck old Dragon's, who was a favourite in the stable.

"I am sure they are going," cries her ladyship; upon which, as upon a view halloo, Genevieve and she darted away, and taking the nearest cut, like sportsmen when the game is up, leaped over some pales and ran directly through Old Crab's fatting hog-stye. Old Comical, who had just carried the tea, toast, and the bread and butter into the little parlor, and was gone out to feed the hogs, whose turn it was to be served next, seeing Lady Charlotte and Genevieve leap flying into the hog-stye, was turned into a post. Away they ran, dashing through thick and thin, and out they leaped again at right angles, driving their way through forty fat hogs that stood and stared like stuck pigs. Now old Dragon had just tugged twenty hundred weight of human flesh and bones over all the dunghills in Old Crab's farm-yard, and got upon hard gravel outside the gate with old Farmer Cartland and his jolly family, when the beast made a full stop to get a little wind, &c. This gave Genevieve and Lady Charlotte the advantage, who ran up to the cart and beheld, to their great satisfaction, Julia's lover sitting on his mother's lap, crowned with Old Comical's striped nightcap. Old Master Cartland, seeing company come, put old Dragon to the cudgel

The History of Mr. John Decastro

with all his might, who made the best of his way to the cart-horse stable, at Broad-Oak.

When a chase is over, folks have leisure to grow cool, and come a little to their senses, for sportsmen are little other than stark mad when they are a-running. Just so it happened to Lady Charlotte and Genevieve, who now came to theirs, and by the help of their eyes and their noses, both saw and smelt what a nasty pickle they were in: in the mind they were it were odds but they had dashed through a horse-pond to have satisfied their curiosities. Old Comical followed them at a great distance with a hog-pail full of clean water in one hand, and a wisp of sweet hay in the other, to wash the ladies' shoes and wipe their silk stockings.

CHAPTER XXVII

Some few matters touching Genevieve brought up to the present time—Lady Charlotte informs her of the Proposals of the Hindermark Family—Further Accounts of Julia—Acerbus the Philosopher comes home from the long Vacation—Genevieve discovers that Mr. and Mrs. Grove are at Bath, and follows them to that place.—*Old Comical fast asleep—starts up, however, at the tail of the Chapter.*

GENEVIEVE had some time since been mistress of her vast fortune, which, what with the accumulated interest, the purchase of the estate in Berkshire, and other additions taken into the account, was upwards of six thousand pounds a-year:—a great deal of money and it may be a matter of wonder what she could do with it all? Old Crab, it may be remembered, was made her guardian by her father the Jew, and her property was all put into his hands for her, where it was not very likely to grow less; the fact, indeed, was that it grew a great deal bigger, for there were few such stewards to be met with as he. She was now become mistress of all, and, as power accompanies money, she was become, indeed, a personage of no small consideration. Having lost her parents before she knew what it was to have any, as a man who hath no children divides his estate between a few choice relations, she disposed of her love between those of her's who lived at the castle and the farm, her cousin Lady Charlotte

Orby too coming in for a good share of it. In her affections she was extremely ardent, so much so as not to stick at a fault to serve one whom she loved. When she came into the possession of the fine property which her father had left her, she bought a piece of land on the opposite shore of the lake, which commanded a noble view of that fine old pile of architecture, the castle, and built thereon a pretty cottage, wherein she put her old nurse who came to England with her, and made the good old woman an allowance of one hundred pounds a-year for her life. Although she, for the most part, resided at the castle, yet she had at this cottage, in which she kept a few rooms very elegantly fitted up and furnished for the use of herself and her friends, formed a sort of establishment, keeping her carriage there, and two or three servants as need were. She was charitable to the poor, and did a great many good offices to her neighbours, but, after all, did not spend half her income, which Old Crab, still her trusty steward, paid into her banker's hands once a-year, when he went to London on that and a variety of other business. Genevieve was one of those who could not exist without being eager in some pursuit. The country was her delight, and farming the greatest in it, so much so that she took an active part in it, and worked as hard as any poor woman for her bread, and ate her's too with as good an appetite as a hay-maker, and, when love let her lie quiet, slept as sound as a ploughman. It may be a thing which some, perhaps, will not be pleased to believe, that a young woman, bred in all the elegancies of high and polished life, should take a fork, a rake, a hoe, or a reap-hook, and work like a poor girl in all weathers; such, however, was Genevieve, and to

this it may be, perhaps, attributed that she never knew a day's illness.

As soon as the Earl of Budemere had made known to his daughter the proposals of the Hindermark family, Lady Charlotte, as it was her custom when any serious matter befell, ran up stairs and locked herself into her apartment, and began to pace backwards and forwards in it, setting tables, chairs, and other utensils out of her way for that purpose, and fell into a deep muse upon what her noble father had communicated. George Grove, a young man of great elegance and excellence, had long been her favourite, and, although she had gone at times so far as to give him a glance with her bright eyes very full of meaning, yet she had received nothing of that sort in return, which would have been the most agreeable to her. Proposals were now actually made in form, and she saw that she might have George if she pleased; but the sweet milkmaid stood in her way. What was to be done, after walking four or five miles in her bed-room to consider, she could not tell. Taking Genevieve into a little summer-house on the margin of the lake:

“I have,” said Lady Charlotte, “a great piece of news to tell you, Jenny, I have found out who the lady is at last that will have George Grove.”

“My dear Charlotte, who in the world can she be?”

“Could you have guessed it?—it is even I.”

“How, in the name of heaven, came you to know this?”

“My father came to me with proposals from the Hindermark family no longer since than yesterday.”

“But Julia is going mad—she weeps night and day—you never can think of——”

“Think of what, Jenny?”

“Think of what!—why, you must know what I would say—think of having of him.”

“Come, Jenny, don’t reckon too much upon me; such a young man as George Grove in these days is not everywhere to be had. I love him a great deal more than you think, and have less mind to refuse him than you imagine: yet, I will not have him if I can help it, but will certainly have him if I can get him if Julia cannot choose but leave him.”

“I am very well pleased with your exception, and hope there is as little danger as I am willing to think in giving you credit for it.—I have every reason to suppose that my friendship is very dear to you, and if you were really attached to Mr. Grove, I cannot bring myself to imagine that you would run it into any such danger as to own it to my face, Charlotte: but, unless Julia was dead and buried, I think I could never forgive you if you were to marry Mr. Grove.”

“My dear Jenny! this is too hard upon me: just as if Mr. Grove might not be forced on me in a way which it would be impossible for me to escape! It is an easy thing to talk, but when we come to the push of a thing to parry it is another matter. When fathers, mothers, and friends come armed in a close body against one—one poor, defenceless girl, what can she do? nay, if she had the mighty spirit of the most spirited, how could she bear herself out against all her relations? I know George Grove thinks me very handsome, for he put in the *very* when he spoke of me one day to my mother; consider, should he be brought over by what he calls my beauty, and court me, and I in love with him too—think on such an aggravated case, Jenny.”

The History of Mr. John Decastro

"You are a very comical girl, Charlotte; and I scarce know what to make of you."

"At all events, this I will faithfully promise you—Love George or not love him, I love Julia so sincerely that I will most certainly make my escape if I can; but I still stick to this, if Julia cannot have him, I will; for that may happen and Julia still be above ground."

"If you are really and truly Julia's rival," concluded Genevieve, "all things else considered, I must say that I think Julia is in great danger—do come this way and look at this poor girl—see, there she is, walking by the side of the water, crying as if her heart was breaking!—Remember, Charlotte, I bind you in a recognisance to the whole amount of my friendship that you exert every power to escape this match—but come, let us go and comfort poor Julia."

And, poor girl, she was much in want of comfort, for when they came to her she had thrown herself on the grass in a fit of sorrow, and was bathing in her tears a miniature picture which George had given her of himself, and some of his letters. One, which she had just received, was as follows:

MY DEAREST JULIA: It looks a little oddly for one whose eyes are blind and dim with tears, to counsel another not to weep; but yet, my Julia, strive for yourself and for me, for my life is woven so with yours, that whatever cuts your thread in twain cuts mine too: think of this, for I know my welfare will be the strongest argument with you to take every care of your own. We must resign ourselves to his will who made us and all the world; we must take what he gives and be thankful: yes, my love, even our misfortunes too; for they make us his soldiers who tells us that we are sent into this world to fight against troubles, and contest

The History of Mr. John Decastro

the matter with every calamity which assails us. Lay this my letter, where I am sure, happy letter, it will be, lay this my letter to your tender bosom, my dearest girl, I do not mean the poor paper only, but the advice which it contains: for heaven's sake let us do our duty, and then we need not fear but if we cannot meet and be happy in this world, we are sure to meet and be eternally happy in a better. How far the commands of our parents may extend over us their children, I own I cannot say, and if I could, perhaps it would very little become me to do it; but I have resigned myself to mine, and think it to be my duty to obey them: if it be not the will of heaven that we should be united, unite at least with me in prayer, and say to heaven, "Thy will be done." I hope and pray that the motives of my parents are good ones; the lady to whom I shall be joined has not been as yet so much as named to me; all I have been told is that she is rich, has a title, and beauty. My heart, my Julia, will be ever yours, and whosoever takes this poor body without a heart in it, will have but little cause to be proud of the bargain. At my first interview with this lady she shall be sure to have my story fairly told her, yes, at full length; I shall honestly tell her that I will put off no damaged goods upon her, for such a husband without a heart must needs be, and the worst of damaged goods too; for what can she expect, what can her friends expect of a man whose affections are engaged to another? I shall fairly and honestly bid them look to what they do, and what sacrifice they may please to make of a child, who must needs marry me and all my sorrows together.

But I must return to my most beloved of all subjects, for I know you would not love me, my sweetest Julia, if you knew that I loved even you above my religion, or against its rules—remember our last talk of all in our little arbour; we agreed that unless we were good it was impossible for us to be happy; nay, that we could not even make each other happy, let our ties be never

The History of Mr. John Decastro

so intimate, our bonds never so sweet, never so close, unless we did our duty to heaven and to our parents: remember, when you gave your dear hand into mine, sweet pledge and symbol of your love, you said, "My dearest George, if our parents forbid it not, I will be yours for ever." But, alas, my love, though yours are not unwilling, mine have forbid our union; and, unless heaven turn their hearts, will make some poor young woman miserable by chaining her to one who cannot love her; and yet, dreadful thought, must promise too, even at the altar, to love her!—Well, if I am forced to this, let them look to it that force it; heaven itself is my witness that I had rather die at the altar than tell a lie at the altar. Finally, let not despair torture thy gentle bosom, my love—it is wicked to despair, for it is as good as to say that there is no such thing as a Providence in the world; some change, as yet unseen, may yet take place, and we may yet be happy.

Most faithfully, yours,

GEORGE GROVE.

P. S. We are on the road, but whither we are going is a secret kept from me:—so I cannot give you any direction, but will write again if possible.

Genevieve and Lady Charlotte said and did all they could to comfort poor Julia, both by words and by kisses, but they did not tell her at that time the name of the lady whom George had spoken of in his letter, which Julia made an attempt to read to them, but could not get through it for crying. So what another could not read they were fain to read for themselves. The letter, she told them, was no secret, for both her father and mother had read it before she had read it herself. Lady Charlotte said, she did not count much upon religion in a storm; "Give me the man," added her ladyship, "who can say his prayers in quiet waters."

About this time there was a great and very terrible

The History of Mr. John Decastro

thunder storm, and a fire ball struck a vast oak in Mr. Decastro's park and rent it up into ribands. Now as it is a custom before some great man makes his appearance for folks to make a monstrous noise with drums and other engines, this thunder storm came very well before the arrival of Acerbus Decastro, the philosopher, at Oaken Grove. This sage observation was made by Old Comical, who walked before Acerbus with his saddle-bags on his shoulder from the ferry to the castle.

"John," quoth Acerbus, "what have I to do with the thunder storm?"

"Buzzy," quoth Old Comical, for so he always called Acerbus, "the thunder storm is your antecedent, and the antecedent hath always something or other to do with the consequent!—the rattling of the thunder comes before you, just as the rattling of the drums before some great man; well, then, I come with your saddle-bags, and last of all comes the philosopher: for, look you, Buzzy, a man of great consequence always puts noise before him, which some call music, skin, wind, and string;—all these go before a great man: nothing's to be done without noise in this world, Buzzy; if a man can't make a great noise himself, or get a pack of thundering boys to make a great noise for him, he had as good be three cloth yards under ground with six or seven tons of marble upon his bones."

Now all this was very droll, but Old Comical might just as well have talked to a wall, for the philosopher was so deep in thought that he heard not one word of it. The long vacation had commenced, and that was the reason why the philosopher came home to see his friends. He had always been made such a fuss with, that he was a spoiled child without getting any hurt

The History of Mr. John Decastro

by it, for he knew it, and was upon his guard against it; but this was a dangerous example, and had best not be followed unless a philosopher be born in a family. Then, perhaps, no harm may come of it. There may be another exception, viz. when a child is born a natural fool;—for then both papa and mamma put together cannot make matters worse. One moment, if you please—we have one just at your service, reader—you have found a fault, perhaps?—it is like enough—Pray, how can a *“child be spoilt without getting any hurt by it?”* we beg to say, that nothing that is spoiled ever is or can be hurt, or get hurt. How can that be?—that is no business of ours—let what is spoiled look to that: when an historian hath asserted a thing, that is enough, and folks ought to be content. It is of no sort of use for people to make a growling and a noise, printed truth is truth, and there's an end of the chapter.

CHAPTER XXVIII

The Meeting of Genevieve and the Philosopher—Their Talk
—A great Kiss, but the great Kiss comes first—Genevieve's mad Couranto—A Race upon the King's Highway—A Man stolen—Two good Children at the heel of the Chapter—*Sometimes Old Comical and sometimes the Solid Gentleman driveth the quill.*

WHEN Genevieve heard that the philosopher was come, she felt just as if a flea had bit her heart and made it itch, and indeed her love for Acerbus was but a flea-bite at this moment in comparison to the vast ulcer which it grew to be in a little time. She ran to meet the philosopher and get a kiss, a common matter, reader, upon a meeting between relations, and Genevieve returned it upon Acerbus's ruddy cheek with such a hearty smack that made the room ring again! Ads'bobs, a man had need be a philosopher to be kissed by such a lovely woman, and get no hurt by it!—It had little effect upon Acerbus, however, who very coolly wiped his cheek with the back of his hand, knowing her eager way, and thought no more of it than if his mother had kissed him in her spectacles. It never came into his head at that time that Genevieve wanted to eat him: *Nota bene*, a lady in love is a great cannibal, and that was one reason why Genevieve ran after the philosopher into the garden, another was to get him alone and talk about love. What an impudent toad! Stay, reader, not talk about her own love, O fie! no—Genevieve had taken fire first, and been burnt to

The History of Mr. John Decastro

the ground—been roasted alive in her clothes—no, it was about George Grove and the pretty milk-maid that she came to talk. They engaged her heart so much that she could scarce think of what she felt herself. So she ran after him in the garden where she saw him walking:—yes, saw him walking, for she watched him like a cat; saw him walking, for she counted every step he took as she looked at him out of her room window; saw him walking, for although he was not her child, she watched him as if she were afraid he should come to some mischief: saw him walking, for the sight of Acerbus gave her black sparkling eyes such a sweet sensation.

“Cousin,” said she, “what letter was that I saw you reading just now in the garden here?”

“One from my friend George Grove,” said he.

“What have they done with him?” said she, “tell me this moment.”

“Taken him to Bath,” said he.

“To Bath!” said she.

“To Bath,” said he; “’tis a town in England, Jenny.”

“I know that, you great fool,” said she.

“You may,” said he, “and I be none the greater fool for that.”

“Yes, you are a great fool,” said she, “for telling me what you must needs know that I knew already; but my telling you that you are a great fool is news to one who thinks himself a great philosopher: what have they taken George to Bath for? d’ye know that, you dunce?”

“Yes I do, Jenny; Charlotte and he will be married there.”

The History of Mr. John Decastro

"You are very cool upon this matter," said she, "one would think you did not care a farthing for Julia."

"I do not count Julia's merits by farthings, Jenny," said he, "as some have done yours."

"What d'ye mean by that, you jackanapes?" said she.

"Why," said he, "I look into Julia's heart, and into your heart, Jenny, to see what ye are worth, and not into your pockets."

"What! you think some have looked into my pocket," said she, "and counted my merits that way?"

"Yes, and that way you have merits and to spare, Jenny," said he.

"Take that away, and what would you give for me, cousin?" said she.

"Why, said he, "there is your beauty, Jenny, and that is another out-of-door sort of a thing, and as for the rest of the lump, there is too much pepper in it for me."

Genevieve gave the philosopher a box on the ear, and called him a blockhead.—"Come, Mr. Wiseacre," said she, "what do you think of this pretty business between your friend George and Charlotte?"

"George has written to me for advice upon it," said he, picking up his hat which she had knocked off his head, "and I told him——"

"Come," said she, "what? what did you tell him? let us hear."

"You want to hear and will not let me speak," said he: "why I told him, as touching the marriage ceremony of which he spake, that if he married Charlotte and loved Julia, and Julia only, that they would force him to make a false vow in the church, and the parson would give him a blessing for telling a lie at the altar."

The History of Mr. John Decastro

“My dear cousin,” said Genevieve, putting her hands between her knees, and squeezing them together, a way she had when in a rapture, “My dear cousin, that was charming! but did you bid George show your letter to them all? did you say anything about obedience to parents? for George is so dutiful, and Julia is so dutiful, that they would both go and hang themselves if their fathers and mothers bid them do so: duty to parents may be a very good thing as long as it does not interfere too much with one’s duty to oneself:—did you say anything about duty?”

“I will answer you one question first,” said he, “and then another, and not two at once, Jenny. In the first place, I bade George show my letter, wherein I argued as touching obedience to parents that a child shall not disobey his parents, but a parent may command a child to commit a sin, therefore a child shall not always obey his parents: all parents are under some law, but if they break that law they disobey the lawgiver; if the child commit sin by the command of his parents, he dishonours his father and mother, but he is commanded to honour his parents, therefore it is his duty to disobey his father and mother.”

“How?” said she—“you have such an odd way of talking that I can scarce understand you—if a child does a wrong thing by order of his parents he dishonours his father and mother, do you say? how is that, Acerbus?”

“I argued in my letter thus, Jenny——”

“O I am so glad,” exclaimed Genevieve, “to get you on our side!—Well, and how did you argue in your letter?”

“Why thus,” said the philosopher—“to obey another

who commands you to do wrong, is to bring the commander into disgrace, but to disgrace one's parents is to dishonour them; he that doeth a wrong thing, therefore, dishonours his parents, notwithstanding he does it by their order: for how can a child be said to honour his father and mother by taking a false oath at the altar by their command? To obey the second who disobeys the first in giving a command to a third, is to disobey the first who hath a supreme right to lay his commands upon both, and exact obedience too: and this thing would George do if he took a false oath at the communion-table by order of his father and mother, who disobey the supreme law by commanding such obedience. Now if George cannot love Charlotte because he loves Julia, but promises at the altar to forsake Julia and love Charlotte, which he tells me is impossible, he makes such a promise at his own peril, and ought to name the impediment as soon as the parson has read the adjuratory charge. I proceeded to argue thus—he that delegates authorities to inferior powers limits the extent of such authorities, but no parent hath any right to command a child to break his laws who delegated to them such authorities, it is the child's duty, therefore, to keep the commandment and disobey his parents. This is the sum of my argument in George's case."

"I am sure you are right," said Genevieve, "but I am dreadfully afraid that your letter will either not be understood or be neglected."

"It may be neglected," said the philosopher, "but cannot be misunderstood:—I bade him put it into the hands of the parson as soon as the adjuratory charge were read, naming the impediment which he is called

upon in so imperious a manner to declare; if the parson be a grave man he will put the ceremony by upon it."

"O if they once get George and Charlotte into church it will be a lost game, take my word for it," said Genevieve, "surrounded as they are like to be by a gang of fine folks who want for nothing themselves, and therefore leave religion to others to beg and to pray by—suppose George should not have spirit enough to object his impediment—or suppose he did, and got laughed out of it—or, suppose a hundred thousand things—"

"Well, but you can do no good, Jenny," said Acerbus, "by running mad about it."

"A fiddlestick's end!" said she—"the thing will be the death of Julia and George too; they had better blow their brains out at once than murder them by inches:—if St. Paul himself rose from the dead and writ them as long a letter as the Epistle to the Corinthians, they would marry them if they heard the very devil hiss at the altar! something must be done and shall be done or I—"

"Dear, dear Jenny!" said Acerbus, "you talk so loud you make the place echo!"

"The devil take the echoes!" said she; "what can be done?"

"Why, verily," said the philosopher, "if time were allowed my friend, something might be done to disentangle his affections from Julia, but this thing is pushed on with so much haste—"

"Haste!" exclaimed Genevieve, "why, is any day fixed? ha? tell me! is any day fixed, I say?"

"Yes, they will be married some day next week; I received this letter—"

"This letter!" said Genevieve, "what letter? you never told me of any letter!"

"Yes, I did," said he; "I just now said I had received a letter, and have just now said what were the sum and substance of my answer thereunto."

"Aye, I had forgot,—give me the letter, let me see the letter, where is the letter? is the man made of wood!" said Genevieve, thrusting her hands into the philosopher's pockets to feel for it, and turning them inside out, and all their contents! all their contents! aye, out came poor George's letter with snail-shells, caterpillars, beetles, and butterflies, for the philosopher was a great virtuoso. She snatched it off the ground, leaving him to pick up his beetles and his caterpillars, which ran different ways, and gave the philosopher a world of trouble, putting his hat upon some and his hands upon others. Genevieve, in the mean time, read as follows:

To ACERBUS DECASTRO.

MY DEAREST FRIEND: I gave you a full account of all matters between me and my Julia, in my last letter: I must now beg most earnestly of you to tell me whether there is not a fault in what I am going to do: I shall marry one woman and love another, pray excuse so wild a term, love another to distraction. I have this moment read over the marriage ceremony, and I am of opinion that I shall commit a sin in it. I know I can speak so to you, who think a sin no laughing matter; I seriously own that I think a sin no laughing matter, nor religion any laughing matter, though I am sorry to say, I am now amongst those who do so, gay folks who either laugh at religion because they know nothing of it, or make a jest of it because it forbids their vices. However, I would not be thought to call in religion to give me ground to disobey my father, or

The History of Mr. John Decastro

to lend a helping hand to get a beautiful woman. I have resigned myself to my parents, and, though in the madness of my love for Julia it is like enough that I may be extravagant, yet I seriously think that I cannot long survive this marriage, preparations for which are making with the utmost expedition, so much so that I am sure I shall not be a single man another fortnight. For heaven's sake, as you love me, my dearest Acerbus, give me your very best advice—read this ceremony with all attention—it is of all others the most dreadful thought, that I should stand guilty of perjury at the holy altar. I have read the ceremony over twenty times, and every time convinces me more than the other, that I shall commit a fault in what I shall now do: but yet, seeing this through the medium of my love for Julia, the matter may be magnified, it is like it may; I am too much interested to judge for myself, I am indeed. It were like enough for a man in my situation to be a great deal more afraid of losing a beautiful girl whom he loves to distraction—than of committing a fault. Spare me not, my friend; but I know you will not sacrifice the truth to me. I am in such a predicament that I can write no letter without asking my father's leave—I have it to write to you—you may guess at my situation by this:—we are at Bath in the Upper Crescent—write immediately.

My dearest friend,
Most faithfully yours,
GEORGE GROVE.

“The Groves are at Bath, then!” exclaimed Genevieve—“no soul here knew what was become of them, or whither they were fled.—Lord and Lady Budemere took Charlotte to Bath last week I know very well—to be married it is now plain enough!—They will no more regard your letter, cousin, than they will regard the wind: they will be the death of George and Julia as

The History of Mr. John Decastro

much as if they shot both through the head—I'll to Bath this moment—where are they?" said she, snatching the letter out of the philosopher's hand—"O, in the Upper Crescent—I'll to Bath this moment, and pull the Upper Crescent about their ears, and bury myself and the rest in the ruins, sooner than this match shall take place!"

And she was as good as her word as far as going to Bath, though, as good luck would have it, she did not lay violent hands upon any of the buildings, but she laid violent hands on something else, as will be seen. She was gone in a moment, leaving the philosopher, upon his hands and knees, scrambling after his beetles, and, putting four post-horses to her carriage, off she went like smoke! The philosopher carried so much live stock about him that it was not very safe for any to come into his neighbourhood, for his clothes were full of beetles, bats, lizards, gryllotalpas and scolopendras that crawled all over him, and drew others which he never caught in search of their fathers, and mothers husbands, wives, children, brothers, and sisters, and some after a time settled with their families and establishments in his garments.

But to return to Genevieve:—whatever else she might lose on the road, she certainly lost no time on it. In she came into Bath on a full gallop, and the post-horses were glad to get rid of her, for she paid the drivers well to give them a good spurring. Away she went, with fresh horses, directly to the Upper Crescent, when she found a great crowd at Lord Budemere's door, and among other things, three or four carriages with servants and horses adorned with ribands. Upon this she gave up all for lost and took it for granted that

the wedding was over: she jumped out of her carriage in a moment, and, driving her way through the people, rang at the house door. A servant coming, she said she wished to speak a word with Mr. George Grove, whom she understood to be in that house.

“He is just going to be married, madam,” said the servant.

“O I know that very well,” said she, “I will not detain him two minutes.”

While the fellow was gone to bring George, Genevieve bit her lips till they bled. George came to the door presently, and the moment she saw him she caught him up in her arms as one would a child, forced him into her carriage, and ordered the drivers to get out of Bath with all speed! This thing, as it were like, filled the by-standers with great admiration. The post-boys exchanged a broad grin or two, put whip and spur to four very spirited horses, and were out of sight like a flash of lightning.

One way to put a stop to a wedding is to take away the bridegroom; and this was one reason why Lady Charlotte was not married to George Grove that morning, and none will make any objection, perhaps, to its being a very good one.

Now it came to pass that the parson stood with his book, and the church doors open, and the clerk ready to do his proper office, when news was brought that a lady had seized George, put him into her carriage by force, and ran off with him at full speed: so the parson ordered the clerk to lock the doors and take care of the church. The servant, instead of giving an immediate alarm, stood some time chattering with the people at the street-door, until another came to make inquiries

The History of Mr. John Decastro

for the bridegroom, when both the servants came to tell the news together, at which the whole party, and that no small one, expressed great amazement. But as soon as the servant who stood by gave, upon being questioned, a description of Genevieve's person, it was soon known who it was that had run away with George Grove. Inquiries were now made as soon as possible in all directions, when Lord Budemere and Mr. Grove, taking the best intelligence they could get, and some servants, put themselves directly upon a pursuit. Genevieve would have fairly outrun them, however, but for an accident; poor George Grove fell ill, and she was forced to stop, put him to bed at an inn, and send for a medical man to attend him. He had, in fact, suffered so much of late, poor fellow, from grief and vexation, that he was much exhausted, and what with his weak state, and the perpetual worry of Genevieve's incessant tongue, giving reasons and making excuses for what she had done, he could stand his ground no longer, but was forced to lie by on the road to get a little strength to go on.

Mr. Grove and the peer, running through the town in which George lay ill, caught sight of Lucy, Genevieve's maid, who stood, imprudently enough, fixed in admiration of a tawdry gown, displayed like a trap in a draper's shop window. They stopped the carriage, and called to Lucy—and they called and called again, for the wary jade stood her ground like a statue, to coin a lie. One of the servants was then ordered to bring her to the carriage immediately, and it was demanded of her, under heavy threats, in what part of the town her mistress might be found.

“My mistress, my lord?” said she, for he was most

The History of Mr. John Decastro

eager to ask questions, "I will show you where she lives, presently."

"Lives!" said his lordship.

"Yes, my lord," said Lucy, "she was alive this morning when she sent me to market."

"Sent you to market!" quoth his lordship.

"Yes, my lord, sent me to market with a basket of ducks, which I have sold and am going home with the money in my hand as you see," showing him the money which she held in her hand to buy the gown: "ducks," my lord, "being but little in these parts."

"The devil take your ducks! where is Miss De Roma?"

"Miss De Roma!" quoth Lucy; "does your lordship think I could live with a mad woman? I love my bones better than all that, so I goes and hires myself to a quiet farmer's wife, and will live upon bacon and cabbage all my life sooner than wait upon any fashionable mad woman upon the face of the earth."

"Drive on!" quoth Lord Budemere.

"A good journey to your lordship," quoth Lucy, making my lord and Mr. Grove one of her best courtesies. As soon as the carriage was got out of sight, Lucy ran to her mistress, and told her what had happened, who could not help laughing at, though she felt like one who had been the cause of, such a scandalous lie. After a day and a night's rest, George Grove was able to proceed on his journey.

This thing, as it were like, occasioned a great deal of talk, and a great many stories were told upon it, and one very much to Genevieve's discredit, which was, that she put a pistol to George Grove's breast, and menaced him with death if he made any disturbance.—

We do not pretend to exculpate Genevieve in this matter, but we will take leave to say that this story is untrue. As for her being herself in love with him, though people will say strange things, it is a little extraordinary that anybody should say such a thing as that; we just mention it, however, to prove how far folks will go, when they are in a talking humour. Now, although we cannot exculpate Genevieve, something, we think, may be said in mitigation of the severe sentence passed upon her on this occasion: and first, the violence of the passions have been often pleaded in extenuation of the worst of crimes, murder itself has often been softened down into manslaughter—if then where an ill motive produced the extravagance the violence of the mind comes in as an excuse, what may be said when love and friendship, amiable principles, push one on to a fault to serve a friend?

We shall take the opportunity to express our sorrow in this place and great regret, at having no such thing as either a man or a woman without a fault:—could we find such a thing it would give us much pleasure and satisfaction to introduce the same to our readers gratis—though we think we should rather find our account in putting up a painted cloth and blowing a horn, taking a shilling a-piece of all curious folks for a sight of such a phenomenon.

Genevieve had exhausted all her arguments upon George, and was fain to go over some of the old ground again to get him in a mind to proceed. He said, “glad as he was of an escape from committing what he thought a very great crime, and declaring in the church that it was his will to take a woman for his wedded wife, when, at the same time, nothing could be more contrary

to it, yet he could not be brought to think that any good would come of the measure she had taken, for although the matter were deferred a little by it, he was sure it would not easily be given up."

Genevieve replied, "If Julia and he would take her advice there would be little danger of that."

George said, "he knew what she meant, but if he could get the better of his own scruples upon it, he was sure Julia would never consent to marry him without leave."

Genevieve overruled this, and said, "there were cases when one evil was to be weighed against another; parents bringing their children into such dilemmas, if anything were done amiss it would be set down to their account. As to Mr. Grove, he had gone quite far enough to cancel all moral obligation on his son's part, pushing him forward with his eyes open upon no less a crime than a false oath at the altar: for, if his eyes were shut before the letter (meaning Acerbus's) were read to him, he could not choose but see every thing plainly enough when it had been: and to marry against his father's consent would certainly be a less evil of the two."

George seemed to think that all was not right in this argument, but either could not find out what were wrong in it, or had no mind to take any pains to look for it. Genevieve, however, held him fast between her and Lucy, and, after a long run on the turnpike road, on which Mr. Grove and the peer had won the race without knowing it, lodged him safely in her cottage, left him in the care of her old nurse, and made the best of her way to the castle to bring Julia to him. When she came there she found Mr. Grove and the peer had come

before her, and told their story, and not a little glad were they to find Julia was safe in the house. Coming in, the first person whom she met was Old Crab:

“Ahey!” quoth he, “Whence came you, man-stealer?”

“I am just come off the road, uncle,” said she.

“Why, then,” quoth he, “men may walk on it without any danger—are you run mad? or, what the plague is come to you?”

“I don’t know if I have been mad,” said she, “however, I am not mad now.”

“All the better,” said he, “we might have had more men chopped up else.”

“What I have done I have done, uncle, I cannot now undo it, and do it better.”

“The devil’s in’t if you could, ‘tis done and over done and anything but well done!” quoth Old Crab.

“So be it,” said Genevieve, “I am like enough to meet with blame, I expect that, thanks will come after, as for blame I am prepared for it.”

“Prepared!” quoth he; “I don’t know what the devil you are not prepared for, that could seize a young fellow by main force in a public street, and carry him off neck and heels out of his friend’s house whether he would or not. What Fury could drive you to do such a thing as this? and, pray, what the plague have you done with him, ate him?—bones and all, I warrant, for nothing could stick in your throat after such an exploit as this!”

“No, uncle; I have not ate him, it was not upon my own account that I have done this thing, but for your daughter Julia’s sake.”

“Yes, yes! you are like to mend matters finely, if all

The History of Mr. John Decastro

Bedlam let loose at once in a gang could not do it!" quoth Old Crab, and marched out of the house, having called to see Julia, who was getting very ill.

Genevieve then ran up to Julia's apartment, and said, "she was come to give her an airing in her carriage," and began to put a cloak upon her.

Julia exclaimed, "My dearest cousin, what have you done? Lord Budemere and Mr. Grove were here yesterday, and said you had come to Bath and taken Mr. George Grove away, and they could not tell what you had done with him!"

"My dearest girl," said she, "what do you ask a thing which you know so well already? but come with me, and I will tell you a very odd story."

She slipt away with Julia, for she had left her carriage at the park gates lest the noise of it might bring her any hindrance if brought to the house, and putting Julia into it, leaped in after her, and took her directly to her cottage. Coming within a small distance of it, Julia espied a man walking on the margin of the lake.

"Who is he," said Julia, "that walks there?"

"Why," said Genevieve, "if you had waited till I were come to the end of my story I would have told you; that is George Grove come out to look for us."

Julia fluttered a great deal at the sight of him, and made some objections to going on. Genevieve, however, bore down all opposition, and wheeled Julia up to her cottage door. The old nurse, who had orders how to manage matters, took Julia into a little parlour, telling her that her mistress staid to give some orders to her servants and would come presently. Julia sat down upon a sofa, a good deal agitated, but did her best to collect all her strength and spirits

to see George. For this purpose a space of about ten minutes was allowed her, when on a sudden the door was opened and George Grove came in. Julia arose, and took two or three steps to meet him, and, fainting away in his arms, dropt her face upon his bosom. George bore her as well as he could back to the sofa, and, observing one of her hands to be clasped, thinking a bottle of salts might be in it, opened her fingers, and found a little picture of himself which he had given her, held within them. She presently came to her senses, and found George hanging over her as she lay reclined on the sofa, and his tears falling into her neck.

After mutual condolences, George told her, with an affectionate kiss, what was Genevieve's meaning in bringing him there, and that her carriage was held in readiness at the door to take them any where they pleased to go. Julia started immediately, disentangled herself from George's arms, who held her fast to his bosom, and said, "Surely I know you too well, my dearest George, to expect that you will urge me to this? Are we not already quite miserable enough? but I shall wrong you with suspecting a thing of which you can never be guilty:—I cannot love you if I were to consent to make you more wretched and myself more miserable than we now are, but I should do a great deal worse than not love you if I thought you could second my dearest cousin in this matter."

"O my dearest Julia," said he, "surely many and great allowances should be made for any in such a case as ours, if any thing can be excused."

"Pray read that letter," said she, taking the last he writ to her out of her bosom, "read it attentively, before you speak another word."

“I need not read it,” said he, “for I very well know what I said in it, but, O my love, how easy a thing it is to say what ought to be done, and how hard to do what should be!”

“This is very true,” said she; “but let us strive to the utmost to do our duty in this very distressing case. As matters are, things may change in our favour, let us not by our own imprudence bar good fortune out: your last letter has given me great comfort, let us make it our rule, my dearest George, and we cannot long be miserable. I love you more than I ever loved you for it, O do not what will make me love you less! In regard to my dearest cousin’s proposal, and I am sure she means well in it, yet I cannot, nay, I am sure you would have me rather die than agree to it: for, whatever turn things may take, whatever forgiveness may come, such an act will leave a deep wound in our bosoms, which, like an ulcer healed at top, will rankle underneath. If it please heaven that we should ever meet, my love, for indeed, indeed you are my love,” said she, shaking him by the hand, while a tear stood on each cheek, “let us not do that now which will then diminish our happiness. Go, my dearest George, resign yourself up to your father, who is now with Lord Budemere at Hindermark, and obey his commands.”

“But, my dearest Julia, how can I do this, and break a higher command? can I walk up to the communion-table and say that I am willing to take lady Charlotte Orby for my wedded wife and not utter the greatest falsehood that man ever spoke?”

“I had forgot that,” said Julia; “but what did you do with my cousin Acerbus’s letter?”

“I read it to my father and my mother, and to Lord

The History of Mr. John Decastro

and Lady Budemere and others who were present, and it was held in contempt by some, and by others laughed at. I then took it to the clergyman who was to read the ceremony, and he said it was of considerable force, but, being a man low in the church, was under too much awe to say a word for me. What can be done, my Julia?"

"Done!" said she, "can you hesitate one moment? your duty, surely; speak for yourself at the altar, name your impediment and refuse to tell a lie there. To run away is a sign of guilt or fear, my love; let us stand our ground and fear nothing but to offend Him who will bless us and reward us if we do our duty."

George clasped Julia in his arms and held her to his bosom in silence.

"Farewell, George," said she, "go and do as I bid you:"—upon which Genevieve's carriage, which was held in readiness at the door to have taken the lovers to Gretna Green if they had a mind to go there, served a very different purpose, and conveyed George to Hindermark, who, resigning himself into his father's hands, returned with him and Lord Budemere to Bath.

Genevieve, who had put herself into closet to be witness to all that passed between George and Julia, when she found that George was come to a resolution to do as Julia had bid him, said but little, for he and Julia heaped gratitude and thanks enough upon her to satisfy any moderate person for all she had done for them. Old Crab, when he heard how Julia had acted in this matter, called her a good wench and kissed her cheek, which was one of the kindest things which he ever did to any body's FACE.

CHAPTER XXIX

Lady Charlotte Orby's Plot to break off the Match between her and George Grove—Lord Budemere goes abroad—Lady Budemere and Lady Charlotte arrive at Oaken Grove—Genevieve's talk with the Philosopher—She falls into a muse—She and her Conscience pull caps—Frederick comes to Bath.

WE put an end to the last chapter with Old Crab's kissing his daughter as it were in token of his approbation of her conduct, which, we observed, with *infinite wit and humour*, and hope our readers will be of our mind, was one of the kindest things which he ever did to any body's *face*. Every body will scarce be of Old Crab's opinion in this thing, and the ladies, perhaps, the rarest of all; who may go so far as to call Julia a great fool, having her lover in her arms and not unwilling to make a dash with her, a chariot and a pair of excellent horses standing ready at the door and at their service, and, notwithstanding so favourable an opportunity, sending George Grove, whom she was dying for, back again to his father to be married to another woman! Such was the fact, however, but whether she did right or wrong, great judges, and those that are not so, will determine. Now if one party call Julia a great fool, another will call her a heroine, and the like fine names, and cry up the thing as a noble victory over the passions: while squeamish, prudish, stupid, and foolish, and the like epithets fill the mouths of others.

Poor George took his farewell of Julia, and stept heavily into the carriage, for Genevieve let him find his way into it himself this time, and was drawn, like a corpse in a hearse, to Hindermark. Genevieve was now grown cool, cool as a bar of cold iron which had been red hot, and, sending her old nurse to take Julia back to the castle, fell into a muse. After a great battle had been fought in her brains, and argument encountered argument upon her conduct, her conscience took sides against her, and she and that divinity fell fearfully at odds. Poor Genevieve! she was fairly beaten out of the field and was forced to take shelter under her good intentions; she now saw that the heat of her friendship for George and Julia had run her into a fault. Yet she was loath to condemn herself, and could not clearly see how a kind heart could bring any body to blame.

Looking out of her window she saw the philosopher walking by the water-side with a book in his hands. She called to him seven-and-forty times before she could get his attention, for he was deep in Aristotle.

“Ah, Jenny,” said he, coming to the window which was open, “I was reading about women here, and your pretty face comes well enough as a commentary to the text.”

“Come in cousin,” said she, “I want to talk to you a little;” her bright eyes flashed fire at being called pretty by Acerbus.

“I was told,” said the philosopher, “that you had got my friend George here, so took my book in my hands and walked this way to see him.”

Genevieve was a little mortified at this, who had quite as lief he had come that way to see her; she proceeded,

The History of Mr. John Decastro

however, to tell him all that had passed between George and Julia at her cottage. The philosopher, having heard all with exceeding gravity, said, "It was very well. But we must distinguish one thing from another in this matter," continued he, putting the fore-finger of his right hand upon Genevieve's bosom, for no other purpose but to call her attention, it made her blush however, "we must distinguish one thing from another in this matter: as thus:—You have a very kind warm heart, Jenny, and always had, and I love you for it, but you have been led to do what you ought not to have done."

"Then you condemn me, do you, cousin?" said she in a lively manner.

"Yes, yes,—condemn—yes—I disapprove—it is one thing to condemn, and another thing to disapprove. To omit the cause of the cause of the cause of the thing caused, we will be content with the causation of the thing caused, and this was love. What you have done was not done out of malice; if so we must have condemned the thing, but out of love, and if so we must disapprove, not love the cause, but the thing caused by love: now answer me, is that which causes a bad thing a good thing or a bad thing?"

"Why, a bad thing to be sure," said she.

"Is love a good thing or a bad thing?"

"Why, a good thing, certainly," said she.

"Is robbing another of the thing that is his, a good thing?"

"No," said she, "it is a bad thing."

"Is the cause of a bad thing a good thing or a bad thing?"

"Why it must be a bad thing."

“Then,” said he, “if you have answered rightly, love cannot be a good thing if it causes a bad thing.”

“You blockhead,” said Genevieve, “how you twist one about!—when I said love was a good thing, I meant a good thing in itself.”

“But,” said he, “when I asked you, if the cause of a bad thing were a good thing or a bad thing, what did you answer?”

“Why, I own, I said it must needs be a bad thing,” said she.

“Did you answer right or wrong?” said he.

“Why, I answered without feeling my ground,” said she, “I confess.”

“Come,” said he, “is robbery a bad thing?”

“Yes,” said she.

“Is to steal a child from its parents a good thing or a bad thing though caused by a good thing?” said he.

“How you tangle things together,” said she, “I can’t say yes and no at the same time.”

“True,” said he, “but you can say no, first, and then you can say yes, afterwards: can the same thing be a good thing at the same time and a bad thing?”

“No, you blockhead,” said she.

“What causes a bad thing is bad, or what shall we say?”

“Why certainly,” said she.

“Then if a good thing causes a bad thing the same thing is a good thing and a bad thing, or shall we deny it?”

“You fool,” said she, “I know very well what I mean but I cannot speak it out.”

“Is the thing you would speak out if you could a right thing or a wrong thing?” said the philosopher.

The History of Mr. John Decastro

“Why, it is a right one,” said she.

“Perhaps you mean to say,” said he, “that it is the use which we put a thing to makes it right or wrong, good or bad?”

“Now you have hit it,” said she, “that is what I would say.”

“Then,” said he, “did you put your love for George and Julia to a right use when you robbed George’s parents of their child?” She was silent. “If you put it to a wrong use,” continued the philosopher, “your love, according to your own account of the matter, was a bad thing and a wrong thing, or how shall we unsay what we have said?”

“I don’t know how it is, but I never can talk to you as I can to any body else,” said Genevieve, “whether you are a greater fool than any body else, or whether I am a greater fool than you, or whether two great fools cannot talk together, or for whatever reason it is”—

“What is a fool?” said the philosopher.

She hesitated.

“Come,” said he, “let us go and look the word out in the dictionary, for we don’t seem to know what it is, and then we may know if it means you or me.”

“Why, you great dunce,” said she, “I know well enough what it is without looking it out in the dictionary.”

“Come,” said he, “tell me what it is.”

“It is an idiot,” said she.

“That is only another word for the same thing, when I ask for a definition,” quoth the philosopher.

“What is a definition?” said she.

“Why,” said he, “it tells us to what set of things any thing belongs, and tells us too how it differs from

The History of Mr. John Decastro

other things. Now a wise man belongs to one set of things, and a fool to another, because they differ, but if I were to ask you if a fool in the form of a man were a man, or a wise person in the form of a man were a man, you would say what?"

"Why," said she, "I should say they were so far both of them men."

"Well, that is the set of things to which they belong so far, but then comes the difference, that is, between a wise man and a fool, and what is it?"

"Why," said she, "want of understanding."

"Well, that may do," quoth the philosopher: "now can you tell what is the definition of a fool?"

"O yes," said she, "a man that wants understanding."

"How did you answer then at first, like a wise woman, or a foolish one?"

Genevieve gave the philosopher a box on the ear: upon which he snatched up his Aristotle and ran out of the house. Genevieve jumped up to stop him, but he was out of sight in a moment. She was very much in love with him, and was sadly afraid that she had offended him, and fell to abusing herself for what she had done, when old nurse returned with a note of invitation for her to the castle.

We must now follow George Grove back again to Bath, whither he went with a resolution to refuse Lady Charlotte's hand at the altar. This match was a money job on the part of Lord Budemere, to which Mr. Grove, quite that sort of fish to be catched with a title, was drawn by the wily peer, who so managed the matter as to lay him under a legal tie to advance his lordship fifty thousand pounds on the day after the mar-

The History of Mr. John Decastro

riage, his lordship standing sorely in need of a little ready cash just at that time. Lady Charlotte's fortune left her by an aunt was fifty thousand more, now, she being come of age, in her own possession. His lordship made an attempt to get hold of the key of her ladyship's strong box, by holding out an estate by way of pledge to her, as well as to Mr. Grove, for the payment of the money at his death, engaging, in the mean time, to pay interest, on which the young couple were to live. Lady Charlotte said, "if she gave up her money to any body it should certainly be given up to her father," but told the lawyers that it was quite as safe in her own pocket. This gave the peer a fit of the colic; he and his stomach, however, were left to shift for themselves; he made sure of Mr. Grove's money, at all events, who was tied down safe enough to his bargain, by Petticraft and the rest of the lawyers; and had gone so far as to vest the money in his banker's hands, ready for an order.

Lady Charlotte, upon meeting George Grove at his return, shook hands with him, and said, "It is well, Mr. Grove, that Jenny has not swallowed you alive—or did she gulp you down and then cast you up again, as the whale served poor Jonah? If you really and truly did go down her throat, clothes and all, pray, how long did you stay in her stomach, and how did you like your new habitation? A full and true account of your travels down the red lane, and what happened to you afterwards, were very well worth publishing, and would make me some amends for having you snatched out of my mouth, and pushed into another's in this rude manner."

George then told his story with a melancholy face;

when she replied, “How far you have done right I shall not pretend to say; but this I will say, that if I had been in your place, and loved Julia better than I had loved Charlotte Orby, I would have made a far different use of my liberty than you did.”

“What would, what could your ladyship have done?” said he.

“Done!” said she; “you have not half spirit enough for a lover; I’d have pounced upon Julia like an eagle, thrust her into Jenny’s carriage, and whisked her off to Gretna Green to the old blacksmith, got well riveted, and left her to preach her sermons at her leisure. Come, come, this is a good sign after all—you must love me best of the two, or you never could have let slip such an opportunity as seldom falls to the share of any lover.”

“Upon my honour, and upon my soul,” said he, “I do not—I should be a villain if I deceive you.”

“Then,” said she, “I will marry you on purpose to plague you for leaving Julia, who is dying for you, in the lurch, when you might have been man and wife by this time—just as if a man who was really and truly in love would have stood gaping and staring at a parson in petticoats—’twas nothing but a little prudishness which she put on to try you, and was most lamentably disappointed at finding such a poor creature, instead of a young man of spirit and gallantry—O Mr. Grove, Mr. Grove, the ladies will laugh at you as long as you live.”

Saying which, she danced out of the room singing a sprightly air, ran up into her bed-chamber, and burst into tears. This was a very odd thing, but her ladyship’s feelings got the better of her, and she just made her escape in time.

The History of Mr. John Decastro

Lord and Lady Budemere, Mr. and Mrs. Grove, and others of their party, expecting no other impediment to their wishes, gave their time to visitings and amusements, in order to allow George Grove, who was ill, a little space to recruit his strength before another day was fixed for his nuptials.

Lady Charlotte, who could put on twenty different faces, and make every one become her too, was sometimes serious, sometimes gay, and played so many tricks that some thought she had grown tired of her wits, and was going to run out of them, or beside them.

During the interval between George's return, and the second day, which was now fixed, a matter came to pass, which, falling in regular order of time, must be given some account of before we proceed to the catastrophe of his matters with Lady Charlotte Orby.

This was, the return of Frederick, Mr. Decastro's eldest son, to England, with his two friends Dogger and Barret, who, after running about the continent for their own amusement, had taken up their abode in Paris, and got so much in debt in it that they were forced to run out of it, or they might have staid a little longer in it than had been agreeable. But, although Dogger and Barret had been imprudent enough, Frederick loved his own ease too well to get into debt for more than he were able to pay, nor had he done so, but that his remittances from England had, upon some account, been withheld, and he was forced, though sorely against his will, to come home to look into the matter. The murder of his brother and the fear of being put in mind of his faults by the hangman, had kindled a hell within him which tormented him with

unremitting fires, although no search had been made for him, Old Crab having been overruled in that matter.

The first thing he did upon his landing, after having punished his agent for playing the rogue with his money, was to change his name, and put on a disguise. Taking a house near the banks of the river Dee, which had belonged to a smuggler, he lived like a gentleman with a pretty fortune. This house had subterranean passages under its foundation, which led to secret caves and cellars, excavated by the late owner, for the purpose of concealing smuggled goods, to which Frederick, who sometime or other might, as he thought, be glad enough of a hiding-place, had not the least objection. With this view he furnished two of the largest of these vaults, which, conveniently enough, communicated with each other, putting a bed into one, and making a little parlour of the other, which had a fire-place in it, for the purpose of keeping the goods dry that were deposited in these vaults, the chimney joining one in the house above in a very secret manner. He was assisted by the said smuggler, who, still retaining the use of the other vaults, felt, at least, an equal interest in keeping the matter concealed.

This smuggler was the noted "Blazing Jack," as he was called, a fellow whom Frederick held in his pay, and for this purpose, viz.: If he should happen to find the land too hot to hold him, he might, at any time, secure an outlet by water, the smuggler having always boats at hand. By this it will be seen what a very troublesome thing guilt is, and what pains bad men are put to to guard themselves at all points. But we cannot dwell on this matter any longer than to say, that

The History of Mr. John Decastro

Frederick, having settled all matters to his mind in this place, came at this time to Bath with his friend Barret, who was advised to try the waters for the gout. Frederick had not been many days in this city before he found out that his uncle, Lord Budemere, was there, and, as great folks and their concerns are in everybody's mouth, found out also that his cousin, Lady Charlotte, was come there to be married to George Grove.

Frederick, who did not care how little of his face was seen, wore a huge beard, passed for an Italian Jew of great opulence, and spoke broken English. Petticraft the attorney, who was a sort of money-hunter for Lord Budemere, soon heard of him, and, getting his address, called on him and sounded him a little on the lending key. Frederick, finding it to be his uncle who wanted to borrow, said he had no more than fifty thousand pounds in the English funds, in a friend's name, which he could immediately put his hand upon; but, if he approved the securities, could, within twelve, or fourteen months at the farthest, command three times that sum. Petticraft was one who always thought a man could not have too much ground to stand upon, and, knowing Lady Charlotte's fortune to be under her own lock and key, was willing to guard the noble earl against all accidents. He therefore waited upon him with this piece of good news, and Frederick had the impudence to receive his uncle at his lodgings, darkening his room a little under pretence of weak eyes. His design in this cannot but be obvious enough; to explain it, however, to such as may be a little dull of apprehension, Frederick, after he had approved of his uncle's securities, and promised him what money he might want upon them as far as they held out, asked

his lordship if his countess were not some relation to his old friend Mr. Decastro of Oaken Grove?

“Is Mr. Decastro an old friend of yours, sir?” said the earl.

Frederick said he had seen much of him in Italy, and they had been very intimate friends there and much together. Having thus broached the matter, he craftily enough drew out of his uncle every thing which he wanted to know about his father and his family, their designs, and plans, and found himself to be in less danger than he was at all aware of.

“As for that villain Frederick,” said the earl, “it was reported that he left the kingdom soon after his attempt on his brother’s life and was dead, but the family had come to a resolution to make no inquiries after him, his design to assassinate his brother having come to no harm; he thought the feelings and credit of the family better consulted in so doing, and had voted on his part that the matter might be dropped; indeed, if vengeance at all weighed in the matter, it was thought that the punishment would be more severe to let him wander, if alive, a vagabond upon the earth, bereft of his patrimony and his friends, a martyr to his own conscience, than to bring him to justice for what he had done.”

Frederick did not much like the taste of this part of his uncle’s talk, and turned the conversation to other matter, but the answers to his questions were not much more to his liking, for he was informed that his brother was alive and to come in for his estates, and that he was soon to be married to a rich cousin of his, Miss De Roma. Though his lordship spoke a little gratis here, every body saw how fond Genevieve was of Acerbus,

and might easily forelay the event of such her fondness. This intelligence came into Frederick's heart like a bullet, and put him so much off his guard, that he owed a good deal more to the darkness of the room, and the excellence of his disguise, than to his presence of mind, for his concealment. The earl asked him what it was that disturbed him so much? He said that the Miss De Roma, whom he had named, had used his son very ill who had paid his addresses to her.

"I heard," replied his lordship, "that some foreign person had paid his addresses to my niece"—(his lordship meant Baron Rump)—and was going on, when Frederick, having got what he wanted, said he had some business, and, giving his lordship his address in Bath, where he said he might be heard of at any time within fourteen months, the earl made his speeches and his bow and left the room.

As soon as his uncle was gone, he started out of his chair, and, pacing furiously about his apartment, gave vent to the tempest in his mind. The thought that Acerbus, whom he mortally hated, should take the estates which ought to come to him, and marry Genevieve too, whom he loved both for her person and her money, and by whom he had been so harshly rejected, almost made him mad. Colonel Barret, who had been to the baths, now came in, and Frederick told him all that had passed between himself and his uncle, and fell to vowed vengeance against Genevieve and his brother, of whose resurrection from the dead and good prospects in life he fully informed the colonel. Barret, who had likewise been refused by Genevieve, to whom he also had paid his addresses, willingly enough came into Frederick's plan of revenge, and promised, with an oath,

to give him all the assistance in his power in any plot against her; and a dreadful plot was formed by them and one Dogger, who soon after joined them in Bath.

Frederick, who, like the devil in Milton, was the captain of his gang, as soon as the scheme was formed, offered, like old Satan, to take the dangerous part upon himself, to go to Oaken Grove upon an expedition of inquiry, and see how the land lay for the execution of his plot. They were detained, however, some time in Bath by Colonel Barret's illness, the waters having brought on a fit of the gout which laid him under the scourge for some time.

We have an opportunity here to give a short account of Barret's sufferings and terrors, who was brought into great danger by the gout, sometimes in his head, and sometimes in his stomach, so much so as to be at one time given over by his physicians, and advised to get ready to die. In this extremity he sent for Frederick to his bed-side, told him that he heartily repented of uniting with him in a plot against Genevieve, and called heaven to witness that if he were permitted to get the better of his disease, that he would have no hand in it whatever. Having much lamented this and many other bad things, he made his will, and, bequeathing all the money which he had got by the devil's help, in two equal shares to his friends Dogger and Frederick, laid his head upon his pillow, and said, he believed that he should go to hell. His disorder, however, took a favourable turn; a regular fit of the gout came into his hands and feet, and in six weeks' time he was upon his legs again, and better in health than he had been for many years, for the gout had the same

The History of Mr. John Decastro

effect as a thunder storm has in the air, it cleared his constitution. Now the devil, whom the gout had driven out of Barret amongst other bad matters, came back again with Barret's health and spirits; his great fright was made a jest of by himself and his friends, and they left Bath with a determination to put their plot into execution against Genevieve.

Of this matter thus far: we must now return to George Grove and Lady Charlotte Orby; but the reader, perhaps, will be glad of a little rest here, we will therefore consult his ease, and break this chapter into two pieces for that purpose.

CHAPTER XXIX

In Continuation.

LADY CHARLOTTE was in a situation very little to be envied by some, though, perhaps, it might be even prayed for by others, who take it into their heads that they only want opportunities to be great heroines, which, if it were an easy thing to be, would be no matter of admiration.—Lady Charlotte was in love with George Grove and loved Julia at the same time, though these two were very different passions: in a word, after weighing matters much in her mind, she came to a resolution not to marry George, though she loved him, and knew she might have him if she pleased, nay, that he would be absolutely forced upon her whether she would or not; and this her resolution was a very noble resolution, and taken for the sake of George and Julia, for she loved them both, as we have said: but how this her resolution was to be made good was now to be considered. It was certainly a great sacrifice on her part, and had great merit, and the more so as she kept it a secret, and did a good thing for the sake of the thing, and not for the sake of getting praised for it: and it came to our knowledge by a very strange accident, which the reader must content himself not to know: now, by the way, the true heroine never does any thing for the sake of praise or admiration, she is always above such things, and that it is which makes her one. The doing any thing and putting it out to the public view in

order to get praised for it, has nothing great in it, but something that is very little. Lady Charlotte had her faults, and the means she took to get rid of George Grove may be by some put down amongst them, and by others again scored amongst her virtues, we shall leave, however, the matter to be sifted by such as will take the liberty to think themselves very wise in spite of others, and their stars to boot, and quit this tattle to come back to our history.

Her ladyship coming into the room with her eyes red and wet, her mother asked her what she had been crying for? She said she had been crying because she wanted to be married.

“Well,” said Lady Budemere, “the day is not at any great distance, cannot you be content to wait a few days for a husband?”

“A husband!” said Lady Charlotte, “what do you mean by a husband?”

“Why,” said Lady Budemere, “by a husband I mean Mr. George Grove; you will be married to Mr. George Grove, and then you will have a husband.”

“Mr. George Grove would be a husband indeed, mamma,” said she, “but I am sure I shall never have him, there’s no such good news.”

“Heavens! Charlotte,” said Lady Budemere, “you must have lost your wits; you know as well as I do that every thing is settled, and as soon as Mr. George Grove gets a little better you will be married.”

“I will not believe it,” said Lady Charlotte, “nor would I have you believe it, mamma.—In the first place Julia is too good to be deprived of him; in the second place, he is too good to be mine; and in the third place, I am not good enough to be his; so if

common justice be done I am sure we shall never come together."

" You like to hear yourself talk, Charlotte," replied the countess; " there is nothing now like to hinder matters, Julia herself, you find, would not have him, but absolutely laid her commands on him to return to his father and his duty, so you need not stick any longer at Julia, she has discarded him, you see, and he is and will be all your own; all objections on that point are done away, she has turned her thoughts to the young farmer, that is plain enough."

" No, but she has not though—I am sure of that by what I have been told by George Grove, mamma; she would have him and be glad to have him, but told him she would not marry him to make herself and him miserable, which would be if she could not have him as she ought to have him, with the consent of all parties; you see with what notions Julia has been bred, Julia will die, and be glad to die rather than do a wrong thing: now if ever a good girl met with her reward on earth she will have George—put my words down." The countess laughed. " You may laugh, mamma, but she will have him for all that:—I know I shall never have George, and that makes me cry, because I love George and cannot get him, and never shall, so don't be so silly as to make a fuss about nothing, with your preparations for a wedding that will never be while the sun shines in the sky."

" The sun's shining time is like soon to be over then," said the countess with another laugh, " for all parties are now agreed upon the thing, and nothing but the death of one or both of you can hinder it, Charlotte."

" How sure we can be of a thing, mamma," said

Lady Charlotte, "when we are not at all sure of it at the same time!—Go and fetch George and we will be married in the garrets now this moment, and then you shall lock us in and put the key in your own pocket, mamma, it is the only way to make a sure thing of it, for if Jenny should lay her great claws upon him a second time she may eat him if she happens to be in the humour, and not leave me a bit. But, after all, if Julia keeps George's heart I shall make but a bad match of it,—yet surely if he had not liked me the best he never would have come back to me: for what other reason could he have for running away from Julia? But the worst of it is, he has such a regard for duty, and such nonsense, I know he had rather die than disobey his father and mother, if they roasted a cat and bade him eat it. I shall always be in doubt about his heart, however, and what's Mr. Grove to me if Julia keeps the best part of him? It may look a little bold, perhaps, but I am determined to examine Mr. Grove before I go any further in this thing; and if you and Mrs. Grove are in the room at the time there will be no great harm in it; I think I have a right to know whether he will marry me because he likes me better than Julia, or because he is afraid his mamma should whip him if he does not."

George came in at that moment, and her ladyship went on—"Come, Mr. Grove, stand here at my knee, I must ask you some questions: Do you know that we are to be married in a few days?"

"I do," said he, with a sigh.

"What do you sigh for? because it is so long to wait for me?"

"No," said he.

“Now pray, Mr. Grove, answer me, when two folks are to be married, don’t you think they ought to like one another better than every body else?”

“I do,” said he.

“Come, sir, mind you answer me as you ought to do, or your mamma has promised to whip you.”

“My dear Lady Charlotte,” said George, with a sad face, “pray don’t talk in this manner, indeed I am in no humour for a jest, indeed I am not.”

“There is no jest in the case, sir:—tell me, has Julia your heart, or has she not? answer me, for if she has I will not marry you, I won’t indeed: a fine thing truly, if Julia is to keep the pearl and leave me to put up with the shell. I am in earnest; which of us do you like the best? tell me this moment.”

“My dear Lady Charlotte, I wish I could be merry with you—but you must excuse me.”

Upon which he was going away, when her ladyship ran to the door after him, caught him by the arm, and brought him back, and said, “You take it into your head that you are doing a fine thing to sacrifice me, and yourself too, to a whim of your father’s,—yet I beg to say, that whatever you may think about doing your duty to your father, in giving yourself up to his freaks, your duty to your neighbour may go a-begging, and your duty to yourself may go after it. Have you no consideration for Julia, or for me? are we to be made fools of? or, to go no further, will you do me the greatest injury in your power, for I had rather you would cut my head off than marry me and love another, because you must needs stick at nothing to obey your father’s orders? You must excuse me, Mr. Grove, ’tis time to speak our

The History of Mr. John Decastro

minds, do you love Julia at this moment better than me?"

"My dear Lady Charlotte, I could love you, indeed I could, but you well know Julia has my heart."

"This is very fine," said her ladyship, "is not this very fine? Sooner than marry a man without a heart I'll marry an ox."

"Come," said Lady Budemere, "you will carry the jest too far,—all's settled now, you know, Charlotte."

"All's settled, mamma, pray who is Mr. All? I shall beg to tell this Mr. All in his ear, that he shall not make me and my friends miserable; I did not know if Mr. Grove might not like me better than Julia, but he still sticks to Julia and I can't blame him for that,—and I am sure it will never be a match." Lady Budemere laughed, and asked her how she came to take that into her head? "Because, mamma, I am sure Julia is too good, and Mr. Grove too good, to be made wretched all their lives."

"You're a comical girl, Charlotte," said the countess. At that moment Petticraft, the attorney, came in and said that Lord Budemere wished to speak with Lady Charlotte in the next room.

"Charlotte," said his lordship, "we cannot go on here without you; Mr. Petticraft will explain the thing."

Petticraft, taking some skins of parchment in his hands, spake thus: "It appears by your aunt's will, my lady, that your ladyship comes into full possession of your ladyship's fortune at the age of one and twenty, and it appears here by an extract from the register of the parish wherein your ladyship was christened, that your ladyship hath already arrived at, and fully com-

pleted the said term aforesaid: therefore, my lady, your ladyship is now whole and sole mistress of your ladyship's fortune, left your ladyship by your ladyship's aunt Margaret, to all intents and purposes whatever: now for and in consideration of Mr. Grove having laid himself under legal tie, here it is, to pay, or cause to be paid, into my lord your ladyship's father's hands, or to his order, the sum of fifty thousand pounds in lawful money of Great Britain, for his whole and sole use, and to be his own true and lawful property, to do with the said sum of money as to him it shall seem good, save and except the interest thereof, for the payment whereof certain lands thereunto fully competent will be saddled and charged, your ladyship is desired to make over, pay, or cause to be paid into his lordship's your ladyship's father's hands, or to his order, fifty thousand pounds, being the whole of your ladyship's fortune, for his whole and sole use, and to be his own true and lawful property to do with the same as to him it shall seem good, save and except the interest thereof, for the payment whereof certain lands thereunto fully competent will be saddled and charged, as in Mr. Grove's case aforesaid: provided always that his lordship, for himself and his heirs, covenants and agrees to make the lands aforesaid responsible for the said two sums of fifty thousand pounds each, to be duly and truly paid at his death, to him the said Mr. Grove, and his heirs, and to you, or to whom your ladyship shall direct or appoint—furthermore—”

“Pray, sir,” said Lady Charlotte, “when is Mr. Grove bound to pay down his fifty thousand pounds?”

“The next day after the solemnization of the marriage, my lady.”

The History of Mr. John Decastro

“Mr. Grove is a prudent man; and as for my money, sir, I will keep it in my own pocket; my papa will have quite trouble enough with Mr. Grove’s money, so I think it best not to add to it; therefore, Mr. Petticraft, I will keep my money in my own pocket as aforesaid.”

“But, my lady, when your ladyship is married, your ladyship’s husband will—”

“O sir, let not that trouble you—I know how to keep things in my own pocket—I’ll be husbanded by no husbands, I nor my money either, and as to my poor papa, he will have trouble enough of his own without my charging or saddling him, as you call it, with my fortune: I am sure my papa only wishes to put my money in a safe place, but it is put into a very safe place already, *videlicet*, in my own pocket, and there it will lie till I please to move it.”

“Mr. George Grove has the character of a very sober steady young man,” said Petticraft, “but, my lady, we cannot tell what turn the young gentleman may take.”

“O sir,” said Lady Charlotte, “let him take what turn he will, he never will turn my money out of my pocket, I have taken care of that.”

“You have, my lady, have you?—put it under trust, perhaps, or—”

“I will save you the trouble of fishing for it, sir, you will not know any thing about the matter, so set your heart at rest:” saying which she left his lordship, and the lawyers, to their parchments and their meditations, and Lord Budemere, for some reason, said not a word.

Now it happened on the day when all was ready for the marriage, and a world of fine folks were come, Mr. Grove, who had not yet made his appearance, came into

the church in great agitation, seized his son **George** violently by his arm, pulled him out of the place by main force, and left all the said fine folks with their eyes a yard wide open.

“If people go on so,” said Lady Charlotte, “I must die an old maid at last!”

“Verily,” quoth Doctor Fiftycox, D.D., “we can do nothing in the way of matrimony without a bridegroom,” and, shutting up his book, put those muscles in motion, which under due directions, move a man out of a church. This move of the doctor’s did not take place, however, until Lord Budemere, who followed Mr. Grove, to bring him and the bridegroom back perhaps, returned, and said, that he got out just in time to see Mr. Grove put the bridegroom into a coach, and drive off with him, and, as he guessed by the great trunks buckled upon it, had no mind to stop at a mile’s end.

“Now,” said Lady Charlotte, “what a pretty fool I look like! Come papa, let us all get into our carriages, and have another run after Mr. George Grove; we had better do any thing than stay in Bath to be laughed at.”

Now, in a fit of astonishment, whether the mind is too much engaged with the oddity of some wonderful occurrence to take any care of the muscles which keep the mouth shut, or however the matter be, the lower jaw is apt to drop and leave the same wide open, this, let the learned account for it, was just the case in the church, where fifty people were assembled to see a wedding which they did not see, and the best reason we can give for that, is, because there was not one: recovering presently from this apoplectic stroke, all the tongues in the place began to move, to pour out notes of admiration at what had befallen, and every body said

The History of Mr. John Decastro

that it was the oddest thing they had ever seen in their lives—which now remains to be accounted for.

This is a very bad business, and we could be glad, for obvious reasons, to bury it in oblivion, but fifty stories are got abroad upon it, and, as good luck would have it, not only not one out of the fifty is the right story, but, bad as the truth is, every one is worse than the truth, which now remains to be told. A man's vices are sure to keep a rod in pickle for him; the Earl of Budemere is one instance out of many. A man may hold two churches by dispensation, but he cannot, in England, get a dispensation for holding two wives; so Lord Budemere held two without one, and, not content with this, committed adultery with another man's wife into the bargain. A pretty brood of chickens to be hatched under one hen, but such is the fact. One would think the world might be satisfied with such a story as this, but the liquor is never strong enough for such as are used to drink drams. If a duel or two, or a murder could come in, how nice it would make the story! and they were put in, for the earl was said to have fought two, and killed one man upon the spot. We must peel off these duels and this murder, however, as dirt which the story has picked up by rolling about in a world which is not very clean.

There were no such things—for Colonel R. agreed to compromise his wife's honour for a sum of money now under demand; and Miss F's family, who were extremely poor, were to be bought off too. These two sore places, unluckily for Lord Budemere, wanted plasters at the same time, and put him into great perplexity, for the demands were high, and his lordship's affairs in a very shattered condition. The reader sees plainly

what a timely supply Mr. Grove's fifty thousand pounds were like to be, and Lady Charlotte's fortune too, if it could have been come at, but her ladyship took better care of the key of her strong box.

We need not draw Miss F's family out of its obscurity any further than to say that she was the daughter of a very worthy clergyman, who was too well guarded against accidents for his lordship to get possession of her in any other way than by marrying her under a feigned name, which he made no scruple to do, without any fear of the countess before his eyes. How the devil brings a man into trouble and leaves him in the middle of it! A rheumatic gout brought the reverend Mr. F. to Bath a little time before George Grove was to be married to Lady Charlotte, and a very few days after Colonel R. had hid himself and his butler in his wife's room, and detected his lordship in a situation which cannot be named. Storms sometimes follow one another. Lady Charlotte, who left no stone unturned for a plot to break off the match with George Grove, and had formed a scheme for that purpose which perhaps would have done for want of a better, but a better was found—Lady Charlotte was walking in Bath one evening, and had left her footman to bring some parcels which she had bought, when she met Lord Budemere coming, not in a run, but very near it, who, seeing her, took the first turn and disappeared in a moment without staying to answer a question which she put to him, which somewhat surprised her ladyship. Presently she met an old gentleman coming on two crutches, who seemed to be in chase of something with all his impediments, for he was in a heat and a bustle, and asked her which way the gentleman were gone

The History of Mr. John Decastro

whom she had just met? Her ladyship plainly saw, from his agitated manner, that he had some very particular engagement with her father, and was curious enough to pump the old man upon two sticks for the matter:

“Do you know that gentleman, sir,” said she, “who just passed me?”

“Know him?” quoth the old man, “yes, very well—he is my son-in-law.”

Lady Charlotte would have kept her colour if she could, but she turned pale, and, being a rosy girl, it could not escape any who could see a woman’s face by day-light.

“Madam,” said the old man, “if I may be so free, will you allow me to ask you what it is in what I have said that turns you so pale?”

“O,” said she, “the person of whom you spoke is a relation of mine, that’s all.”

“If that is the case we are related too, madam; for that gentleman, whom you call your relation, has married my daughter.”

Lady Charlotte could not keep herself quiet for her heart, but changed colour and panted, and tried to conceal her agitation, which made it worse.

“I beg for your excuse, madam,” said the old man; “but will you favour me so far as to say if this person be nearly related to you, or not?”

“He is only my father, sir,” said she.

“Then your name,” continued he, “must be Morris.”

“No, sir,” said she, “my name is not Morris.”

“I am afraid you will think me too bold,” said he, “but may I beg for your name, madam?”

“I am not at all surprised at your curiosity, sir,”

said she, "for I own I have at this moment quite as much as you—and if you will answer me all my questions I will as faithfully answer all yours—to begin, my name is Lady Charlotte Orby, and his name, who is oddly enough become the subject of our conversation, is the Earl of Budemere."

The old man took a step or two back and dropped his shoulder against the wall of a house to support him. Lady Charlotte gave the old gentleman what assistance she could, and sent her footman, who then came up, for a chair. The old man was put into it, and the chairmen, taking the direction where to go, carried him away.

Lady Charlotte excused the thing to her servant by saying the old man was taken ill in the street, and walked home. As soon as it grew a little dark Lady Charlotte, who took care not to forget the old gentleman's address, wrapped herself up in a cloak and slipped out unobserved, and coming to the door of a house in an obscure street, knocked at it, when a beautiful young woman neatly dressed came and asked her for her errand. Her ladyship said she was ordered by Lady Charlotte Orby, to inquire how the old gentleman did whom she had sent home in a chair?"

"It was my father," said she, "and I humbly thank her ladyship for her goodness to him; he is gone to bed, for he said he was a little worse this evening; and, indeed, that was all he did say."

"Pray, madam," said her ladyship, "will you allow me to ask if you are Mrs. Morris?" She said she was. "I am a little tired," said her ladyship, "may I beg a chair for five minutes?"

She was then shown into a neat little parlour, and

sitting down, said she knew Mr. Morris very well. Lord Budemere had carried on his intrigue in this poor family with such an air of mystery as had excited no small curiosity in it about him, which made the poor young woman eager enough to ask questions, by which Lady Charlotte soon found that the old gentleman had retired without telling his daughter the news which he picked up in the street. Her ladyship thought it better to leave it to another to explain matters, so, by evading some questions, asking, and answering others, she fished out the following facts: That she, Mrs. Morris, met with his lordship in a stage-coach, who came into it, as she thought, for no other reason than because she was in it, that he followed her into Cornwall, and took a lodging in her village, that he made several attempts to get her for his mistress, and, finding at last all means vain except honourable ones, he paid his addresses to her, and had been married to her two years and an half, the fruits of which marriage were two fine babes which she then shewed to her ladyship. Pressed as he had often been both by herself and her relations to say who he was, and what were his family, he always declined giving any account of such matters upon account of a quarrel in it, and why that should be the reason of his concealment he would not say. He always had a great deal of money, and from his air and manner seemed to be some superior person: used to leave her at times for two months together, going to London, as he said, to try to make up family broils, and would be so engaged very often as to stay only a few days with her; his manner was very kind and attentive to her, he seemed very fond of her little ones: her father, she added, was come to Bath for the

use of the waters, and they had left a letter for him, should he come, for he was not at home when they came away, to say that they were gone to Bath.

Lady Charlotte then left the house, saying, that it were not unlikely that she, or Lady Charlotte Orby herself, might call the next day, who, she added, felt very much upon her father's account. After this curious adventure some wet days and a bad cold confined her ladyship to her room for a week, who, after a good deal of balancing matters in her mind, came to a determination to keep the thing a secret for the present, but soon took an opportunity to call on Mrs. Morris, whom she found overwhelmed with sorrow, her father having communicated the sad news to her that her husband was none other than the Earl of Budemere, then living with his countess in Bath.

While they were talking, the poor girl's father came in, and Lady Charlotte said she had taken the liberty to call to ask him how he did, and was glad to see that he had left off his sticks. He said her ladyship did him much honour, that he was much better, and believed the great distress and agitation of his mind had been so far of use to him as to remove his complaint; that since he met her ladyship in the street, and he begged again to thank her for her kind assistance, he had sent several letters to the Earl of Budemere, but could get no answer to any but the last, in which he had found himself under a necessity to mix threats with entreaties. He had consulted a lawyer on his case, (who happened to be Petticraft, his lordship's solicitor,) and was advised by him, having due regard to his lordship's high rank, to come to some private compromise in the business, which might be done without making

any disturbance in his lordship's family. He had held off, however, and thought that such crimes ought not to lie hid, that, be the man what he might, he ought to be made a public example, and in the mind he then was, such was his determination.

Lady Charlotte said that the injury which her father had done his family was certainly extremely serious, so much so that it could be by no means repaired. She was of opinion, however, that it were better to follow the advice of the lawyer, and make no noise in the business.

"The mouse," said her ladyship, "had best let the lion alone; you are sir, none other than a poor curate, as your daughter informs me, and as little able to stand your ground in this thing as the little creature which I have just named against the king of the beasts."

He made answer, "that her ladyship's comparison had nothing to do with him; he lived in a country that would give him justice if he asked for it, and, weak as he might be, he would do his best to pull such a huge mass of guilt into the sight of the world."

"You may conceive, sir," said she, "what I must feel upon this shocking subject; I have kept it at present a secret in my breast."

The old man said it should not be a secret long; he felt much for her ladyship, and others, as innocent as herself, but he expected the lawyer presently, meaning Petticraft, and was determined to prosecute such a villain with the utmost rigour of the law. He made an apology to her ladyship for using so harsh a word, but hoped that the agonies of his mind might excuse an intemperate expression.—Lady Charlotte said, she was ready to make every allowance, and taking a promise

that every word which had passed between herself and them should be strictly kept a secret, left the house, and, concealing herself in a corner, saw Petticraft go into it. Lawyers, who live and breathe amidst storms and tempests and outrageous passions, are never so much in their element as when all the elements are in disorder. Petticraft advised the poor parson to be quiet, told him that his lordship had some good livings in his gift, and one likely soon to fall, of five hundred pounds a-year; he would, if he pleased, call on his lordship and see what could be done for him.

"It would be to put a living to a fine use," said the old gentleman, "to stop a hole in my daughter's reputation with a church steeple!—I'll die starved to death in my curacy before I will take the best benefice on earth by way of compromise for my daughter's infamy!"

"We must be a little cool in these matters," said Petticraft, "and not quarrel with our bread and butter, sir; you will see things in a better light when the sky clears a little; if this be a sin, for so you will call it I suppose, what can be a better expiation for it than a church?"

Petticraft, however, might have talked his tongue to a cinder before he could have persuaded the parson from making a public exposition of his lordship in the mind he then was. He was a poor man himself, it was true, but he had rich friends who would support him; so he sent Petticraft with terms of defiance to Lord Budemere, who, with great difficulty, and with the assistance of all Petticraft's art, bought the parson off with a promise of twenty thousand pounds, and a day fixed for payment.

This was one of the uses to which Mr. Grove's

money was to be put. The other was as follows: Lord Budemere had made a very low bow to a colonel's lady, as aforesaid, this was very true, but that he fought and shot the colonel was not quite so, for the colonel died of a fever, and not of a gunshot wound. Petticraft, a useful man, was employed in this affair also. Of the fact there could be no doubt, since the colonel himself and his servant were concealed in his wife's apartment. Petticraft advised his lordship not to come to a trial, and the colonel took ten thousand pounds, and a day fixed for payment. So his lordship stuck spurs to the affair between George Grove and Lady Charlotte in order to get hold of Grove's cash as soon as possible. How Lady Charlotte picked up intelligence of this last affair, is not known, but it is supposed to have come through a servant whom she had lately hired from the colonel's house. Be that as it may, her ladyship was in full possession of all these gay exploits of her father, and sent an anonymous letter to Mr. Grove containing an accurate account of both, the uses to which his money was to serve, and a reference to Petticraft for a proof of all; who, as soon as he read the letter, went to the lawyer without a moment's delay. Petticraft, after a little hesitation, which was of little use, upon being pressed home, said, that however Mr. Grove came by his knowledge, all was certainly true.

“Very well, Mr. Petticraft,” whispered Mr. Grove in his ear, “we are bound in honour to keep his lordship's secrets, it is all mighty well—good morning, good Mr. Petticraft;” saying which, he walked out of the lawyer's chambers upon his tiptoes, as if he was afraid of disturbing Mr. Petticraft's family. What followed has already been said.

CHAPTER XXX

Mr. and Mrs. George Grove return to Hindermark from Bath—News arrives at Oaken Grove of George Grove and Lady Charlotte's Marriage—The Countess of Budemere and Lady Charlotte's Arrival at the Castle—Lady Charlotte falls in love with Harry Lamsbroke.

THE right honourable the Earl of Budemere was now left in no very pleasant situation. The day was at hand for the payment of twenty thousand pounds to the poor parson, and the day was likewise at hand for the payment of ten thousand pounds to the colonel, but the day was not at hand which was to put the ready money into his lordship's hand to make good the said payments in hand. The first thing he did, was to consult Petticraft on the business, who, cunning as he was, could not put his lordship in any way to pay thirty thousand pounds without money. There was but a fortnight to come for the colonel, and a week for the parson. Feeling himself in a dilemma, after consulting the lawyer, his lordship consulted his heels, and ran away from Bath to attend, as he said, a call of the House. Two lucky things happened, however; an old incumbent died about this time, and gave his lordship an opportunity of presenting the poor parson to a living of five hundred pounds a-year, which the old gentleman, after a little pause, was wise enough to accept, finding nothing else was to be had. The other fortunate event was that the colonel died of a fever, which rubbed the rest of the chalk off the wall. Instead,

The History of Mr. John Decastro

however, of attending to the calls of the House, Lord Budemere packed up his matters and left the kingdom to shift for itself; or, in other words, finding no good to be done in it he ran out of it, and visited foreign parts.

Mr. and Mrs. Grove packed up George and brought him back to Hindermark without speaking a loud word, and, though George expressed his astonishment by asking one thousand six hundred and fifty-seven questions touching one head, viz., how he came not to be married to Lady Charlotte Orby, he got nothing for his pains but this short sentence—"George, you may go and marry your milkmaid if you will, for, before I will call Budemere 'brother,' I will see him at the devil!" These words were uttered in the breakfast-parlour at Hindermark, at three and forty minutes after nine o'clock in the morning, as loud as Mr. Grove could roar for his heart. Mrs. Opossum, the housekeeper, being great with child, and opening the said breakfast-parlour door with a bill of fare in her hand, was so alarmed at hearing such an unusual sound proceed from the mouth of Mr. Grove, that she fell in travail and came at seven months with three children.

"'Sume my body!" quoth Old Comical, "if Mr. Grove had spoken another loud word, if all the children hadn't run out of the world back again as fast as they came into it!"

After his lordship's departure the Countess of Budemere took it into her head that she would not stay any longer in Bath by herself, and, whether pricked by curiosity to ask the reason why Mr. Grove had spoiled the wedding, or because she had a mind to get as far from Bath as possible, or because her landlord would

not trust any longer for his rent, or because she had got the fidgets, or for all these reasons put together, she ordered four post-horses to be put to her carriage, took Lady Charlotte with her, and made the best of her way to Oaken Grove, where she arrived without meeting with any accident worth recording in this our history, except drinking a gill of fine Cognac on the road for a cruel fit of the colic, which, being a noble medicine for the wind, gave her ladyship instant relief.

Matters at Oaken Grove stood in a row as follows: Mr. and Mrs. Decastro were in good health at the castle, though not quite so young as they were, reader, when we last parted from them. Acerbus, the philosopher, was come home, as aforesaid, for the vacation had commenced, and had brought with him his cousin, Harry Lamsbroke, a brother Oxonian, and very intimate friend; of whom, if we have not already spoken, we shall soon say a great deal. News had come to the castle that Frederick had left England, but what part of the globe was enlightened by his countenance no astronomer could tell at that time. Old Crab and his wife jogged on at the farm as usual, but poor Julia's forlorn state hung like a black cloud upon their house. Old Comical had got possession of his five thousand pounds by the help of Old Crab, left him in his father's will, and was just returned from a visit to Cock-a-doodle, where he left his brother, the squire, in a very ill state of health; his laughing fits had been more frequent and violent of late, and weakened him a great deal. The love-sick Julia resided altogether at the castle with her cousin Genevieve, who nursed her with the affection of a sister, visited at times by Dr. Grosvenor, a very worthy physician, who, out of gratitude

for a good turn done him by Old Crab, paid his visits without being paid, and gave his directions without taking any fees; it was, he said, the most extraordinary case of attachment that had ever come within his knowledge, and was of opinion that it would end fatally, unless the object of her affections could be obtained for her. He was sorry to say that she gradually grew worse, and, though the steps by which she was descending were very slow, she still continued to descend, and, if some relief were not speedily to be had, she must come to the ground. Gentlemen of his profession out of tenderness, perhaps, were too apt to conceal these things; he felt it, however, to be his duty to give notice in these cases, and conceived that the force of a blow might be in some degree broken by its being foreseen.

Old Crab received this intelligence with his usual fortitude: "Look you, doctor," said he, "I look upon my poor wench as already lost, and I never looked upon her as any other than a thing that might be; he that reckons upon a thing as out of danger, because he sees no danger, is a fool: there is a parting clause, doctor, in the conditions upon which we receive every thing on earth; he, therefore, that falls out with the lease by which he holds things here, is an ass. God's will be done!"

The doctor saw a drop of water upon Old Crab's face, but took no notice of it. Let it not be thought, that because Genevieve was never at rest when Julia was out of her sight, or, indeed, when she was in it, that she was at all neglected by others. Her father and mother paid her every attention, Mr. and Mrs. Decastro shewed her every care, Acerbus, the philoso-

pher, would sit and read in her room, Harry Lamsbroke could scarce speak to her without tears in his eyes, and Old Comical, who ran on all her errands between the farm and the castle, said Lady Charlotte deserved to die an old maid with nothing but a tom cat for her husband, for robbing his young mistress of her sweet-heart: thus stood matters at Oaken Grove at this time.

By a rule of precedence, a lie, as it is fitting, goes first, and truth follows after. One came, and a great one too, with speed, to wit, that the ceremony was over, and Lady Charlotte and George Grove were married. A friend had writ to the butler at the castle to say, that he had been present, and saw them married with his own eyes. Alas! this news soon reached poor Julia's ears, which, indeed, had this comfort in it, that she was sure matters could now be no worse, and to know the worst of a thing may be the best part of bad news. She said she had long been prepared to hear it, but she thought that her sorrows would be short. It grieved her, however, to think that she had borne her trial so peevishly. She loved Lady Charlotte, she said, and wished her happy; she would have been glad if her unfortunate attachment could have been kept a secret, she had been a weak girl, and hoped for the excuse of all. On the other hand, this news put Genevieve into a rage. She had expected, if Lady Charlotte were sincere in her friendship for the beautiful milk-maid, that she would have broken the match by some sleight of hand; she had, indeed, some hope in this, and upon this ground she had stood, but this news pushed her off, and she fell into despair. She left Julia's apartment, where she was sitting at the time it came—brought in by an officious maid-servant, who

The History of Mr. John Decastro

thought the best thing she could do was to tell the worst news—and ran out into the park to give vent to the storm within her.

It came to pass as she was pacing about, weeping, talking to herself, striking her forehead and raving like one out of her senses, at a sudden turn she bounced against Lady Charlotte, who had taken it into her head to get out of the carriage and walk up the hill from the ferry towards the castle. She stared, at first, like one who had a mind to disbelieve her own eyes, and taking a step or two back, as if Lady Charlotte was too near to be seen—"So!" exclaimed she, "your ladyship is married, I hear!"

"No," said she, "my ladyship is not married, there's no such good news."

"Not married!" said Genevieve, if raving can be called speaking.

"Not married, I say," replied Lady Charlotte.

"Why," said Genevieve, "a man has sent a letter from Bath to say that he saw you married with his own eyes! What d'ye think of, that my lady?"

"Why," said she, "I think that there is certainly one man in Bath who can tell a lie to keep up the credit of the place."

"Your ladyship may be an instance that a lie can be told out of Bath as well as in it. Your ladyship's fine feelings may prompt you to deceive us out of mere tenderness, perhaps——" and here she stopt to pant, for she was half choked with passion.

"My ladyship has no such meaning," said Lady Charlotte; "fine feelings, indeed! better have no feelings at all than feel as I feel! I wish all sort of feelings were at the deuse! fine feelings! I was carried

to church as a bride, and brought back a great fool! What have they done with Mr. George Grove?"

"Done with George Grove!" said Genevieve; "why, they took him to Bath to be married to your ladyship—and married you are, put what face you please upon it, madam."

"Married!" said Lady Charlotte; "for a poor girl to be hoaxed in this manner were enough to drive her mad! married, indeed! I have been hoaxed, and fooled, and laughed at—any thing but married! I am no bear, you need not be afraid I should bite you!"

"Is it possible!" said Genevieve; "how can this be?"

"I wish it had been impossible," said her ladyship; "but any thing is possible, I think, when I am to be made a fool of! this has been a pretty farce! fine fun at Bath for every body but myself! One joke would not serve it seems—we were all dressed out and ready to go to church, in came you, and snapt up the bridegroom, and all the folks laughed. We had all got into church the next time, when in comes another hawk and snapt up my bird a second time from under the very wings of the parson!"

While they were talking, George Grove came upon them unobserved, and touching Lady Charlotte on the shoulder, asked her how she did after her journey?—This was another electric stroke, and it made her ladyship jump.

"Why, Mr. Grove," said Genevieve, "Charlotte, here, says you are not married!"

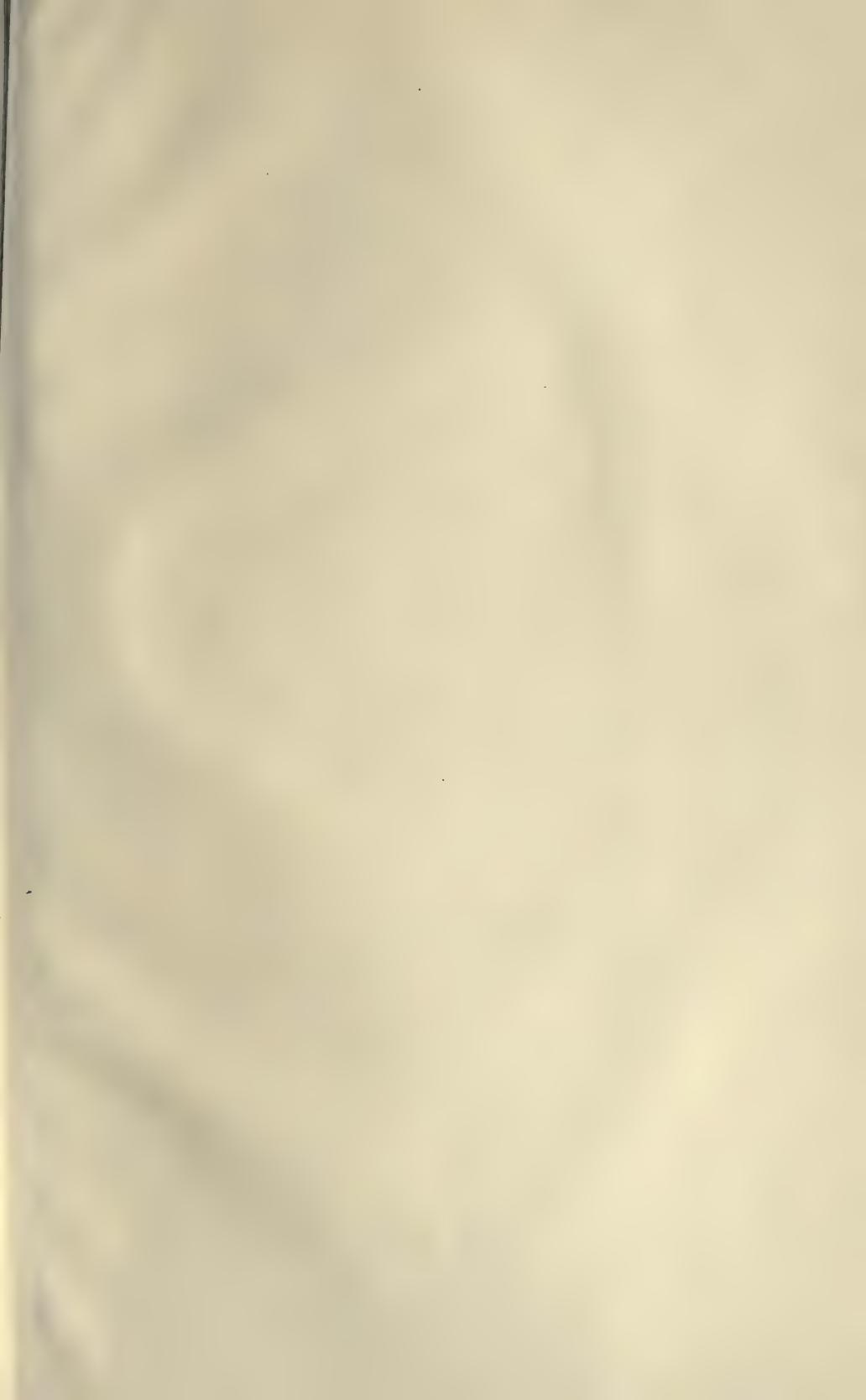
"And she says truly," quoth he, "we are not married, nor very like to be, for my father has given me leave to visit Julia, and tells me that I may follow my

The History of Mr. John Decastro

head, if I will, and marry her if I please, for he has had enough of lords and ladies."

Upon hearing this, Genevieve, scarce knowing what she did, catched George round the neck and actually kissed him for joy! The countess now came up, took them all into her carriage, and drove away to the castle-gates: as soon as George Grove got into the carriage, the countess, as might well be expected, asked him what was come to his father? and what in the world had led him to do such a thing as he had done? George told her that he knew no more than she did, which certainly was not quite the sort of answer to satisfy the countess's curiosity, who might as well, indeed, be kept in the dark. Mr. Grove of Hindermark was a very close man; Lady Charlotte was close also, and so far might have come very well into his family, for how he came by his intelligence he never knew, Lady Charlotte kept all her discoveries to herself: she was a very comical girl.

END OF VOL. I.





University of Toronto
Library

DO NOT
REMOVE
THE
CARD
FROM
THIS
POCKET

LE
M4277h

59302

Author Mathers, John

Title The history of Mr. John Decastro. Vol. 1.

Acme Library Card Pocket
Under Pat. "Ref. Index File"
Made by LIBRARY BUREAU

